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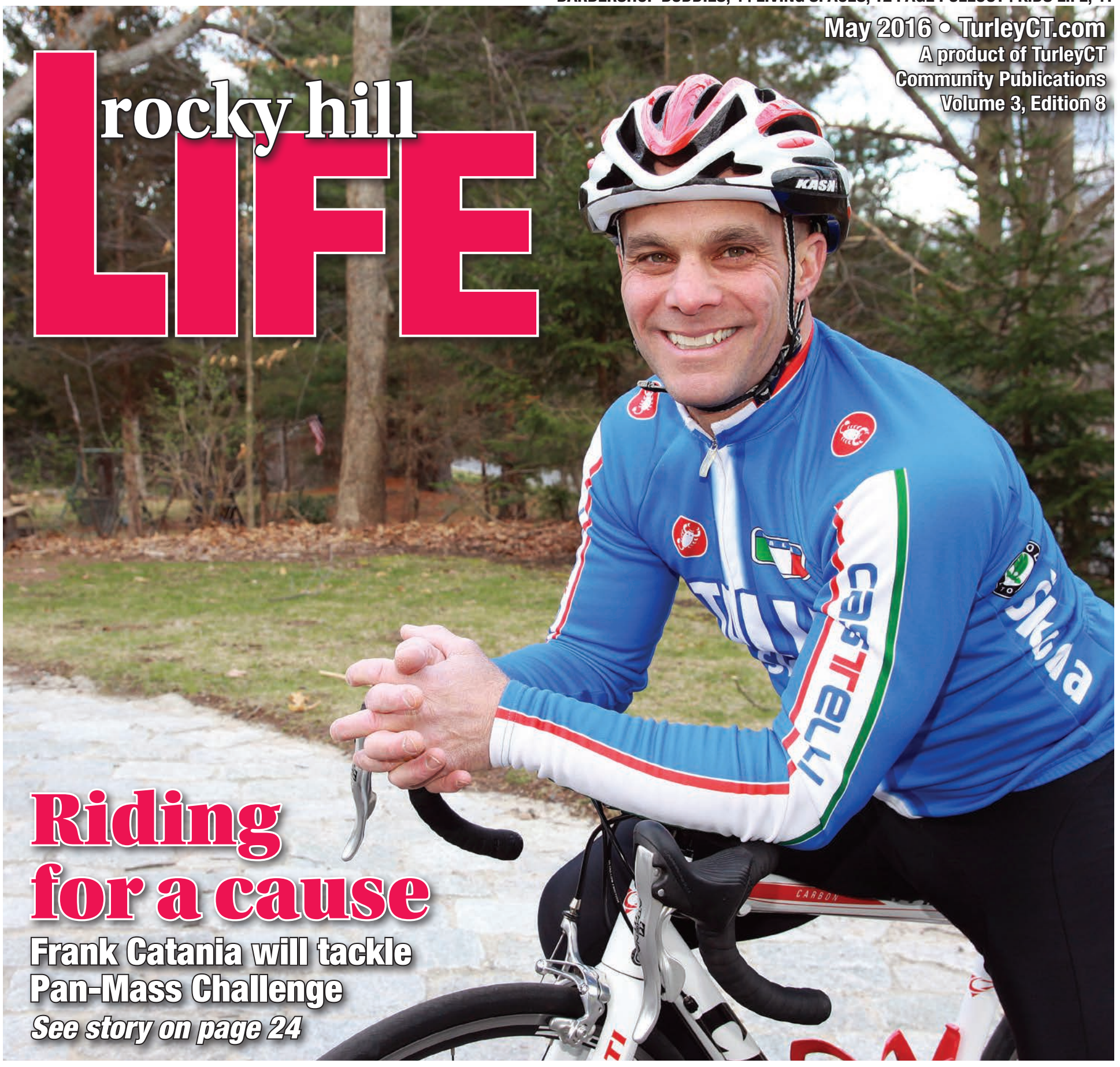

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Frank Catania will tackle Pan-Mass Challenge

See story on page 24

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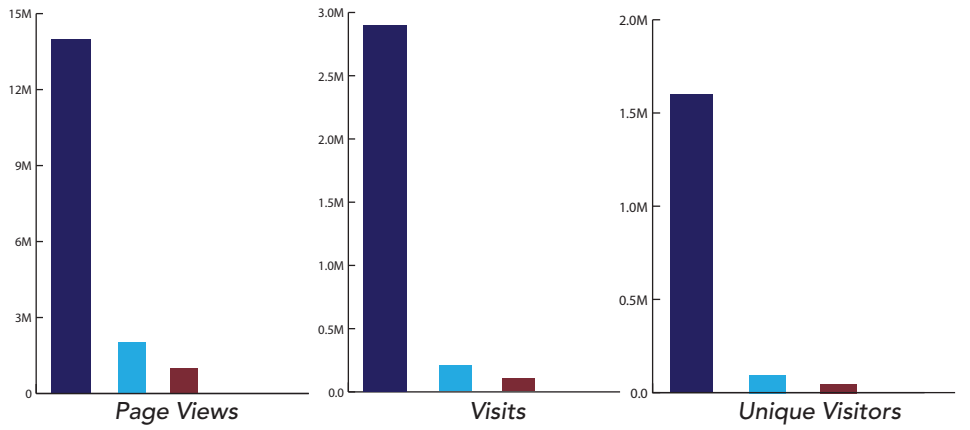

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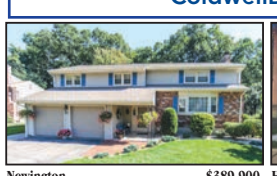
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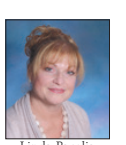
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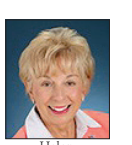
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QUOTE OF NOTE:

"I was always in the chorus in grammar school and I was the only kid in my class who could yodel."– *Michael D'Amore*

See story page 4

ON THE COVER

Frank Catania is collecting donations for his role in the Pan-Mass Challenge, a bike ride to raise funds for the Dana-Farber Cancer Institute.

Photo by Lisa Brisson
See story page 24

4 Barbershop buddies
7 Council tackles budget
8 New location
16 Students of the month
18 Stepping up
21 Leading by example
30 Housing authority
32 LIFE in the classroom
36 Slice of LIFE
39 Calendar
40 From the mayor's desk
41 Kids LIFE
50 News roundup

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Photo by Lisa Brisson

Members of Bandstand include lead singer Michael D'Amore of Rocky Hill, seated, tenor Gary Sandman, bass Mike Wheeler and baritone Dick Wurst.

Barbershop buddies

Michael D'Amore and his quartet sing with an old-time charm

by Allie Rivera
Staff Writer

The Connecticut Radio Information Services station in Windsor was calm. A janitor with a whirring vacuum cleaner walked slowly through the lobby, the front desk occupied only by an empty chair, but the space was not completely void.

Coming from the next room over, like a portal to another time, were the sounds of old barbershop tunes.

Bandstand, the barbershop quartet that consists of Gary Sandman, Mike Wheeler, Dick Wurst and Rocky Hill's Michael D'Amore, practices each week in a small conference room at CRIS, a radio station that serves the blind. Their skill and dedication to their music has led them to perform at larger venues such as the Mark Twain House, the Governor's Mansion and even Mohegan Sun Arena.

"Regardless of the size of the audience, they get the best that we've got," Wheeler said. "Whether it's one person or 4,000 like at Mohegan, we give it all we've got."

The quartet originally formed in 1997 with D'Amore and Wheeler at the helm as part of a larger network of barbershop singers throughout the world called the Barbershop Harmony Society.

"The state has 11 chapters of the organization and we have two of us from the Manchester chapter and two from the Hartford chapter," Wheeler said.

Bandstand was not D'Amore's first foray into music.

"I sang my first solo in church when I was 8 years old," the longtime resident said. "I was always in the chorus in grammar school and I was the only kid in my class who could yodel."

As he grew older, he continued to sing recreationally as he taught at the Culinary Institute of America in New Haven before it moved to Hyde Park, New York, in 1970. Following that, D'Amore moved to California, where he performed solo work with a baritone ukulele.

D'Amore and his wife moved back to Connecticut in 1993 when

they both began singing in church, but he felt as though he still wanted more opportunities. Two years later, he joined the Insurance City Chorus in Hartford where he met and befriended Wheeler, another longtime singer.

"I've been a barber shopper for 58 years and this is my third quartet," Wheeler said. "I started singing in the college choir and I've been singing in church choirs ever since."

A longtime broadcaster at CRIS as well as a clinical lab supervisor, was he able to get the band the rehearsal space it uses each week.

Since its inception 18 years ago, Bandstand has gone through a few different iterations, but D'Amore and Wheeler have remained. The two newer members also have extensive singing experience.

"I sang in a high school choir, a college glee club and after a big hiatus, I got into barbershop about 33 years ago," Wurst said.

He works as an associate professor of biology at Central Connecticut State University and has been part of Bandstand for 12 years.

Sandman, who joined the quartet roughly six years ago, has the greatest amount of technical music experience in the group. After obtaining his bachelor's degree in vocal music education, he worked as a chorus teacher in Massachusetts until budget cuts across the state forced many schools to reduce art and music in the schools.

"So I got into restaurants, but I was always singing with some group or another. I also do karaoke, almost professionally," he said with a laugh. "They don't pay me, but people get upset when I don't show up."

Getting the four men together as a quartet took a great deal of practice, but all said they are thrilled with the structure of the group as it stands.

"Some people think you can take any four guys and throw them together, but it's not true," Wurst said. "You change one voice and it changes the whole quartet."

Barbershop singing has given them an opportunity to pursue a passion and develop their talents while enjoying each other's friendship.

"With the exception of the professor over here," Wheeler said, pointing a thumb at Sandman, "we're not musicians by trade or education. We just enjoy doing it."

"I don't know. I can streak a mean petri plate," Wurst said with a laugh.

A singing movement born in the 1930s and 1940s, barbershop is characterized by its four-part chords in each song. A quartet consists of the lead, who generally sings the melody, a tenor, who provides harmonies above the lead, a bass, who provides the bass line to the melody, and a baritone, who fills in the chord.

"I was always in the chorus in grammar school and I was the only kid in my class who could yodel."

–Michael D'Amore

In Bandstand, D'Amore takes the lead while Sandman sings tenor, Wheeler bass and Wurst baritone.

"Individually, we're not very much, but when it comes together it makes this great, full sound," Wheeler said.

The group stressed that barbershop is different than much of the a capella music that is performed today in both its style and its message.

"First of all, barbershop songs are simple. You could be humming them on the way home after hearing them once," Wurst said.

"If you look at college a capella groups now, they usually have a soloist and everyone else is standing behind them doing 'bum bum bum bum,' but they aren't getting the harmonies."

"Barbershop also always tells a story," Wheeler added. "The story of 'The Rose' is about a jilted lover in a way that you don't get in these modern songs."

Due to the widespread membership of the Barbershop Harmony Society across the globe, members of Bandstand have been able to meet and bond with fellow singers wherever they travel.

Helping to form those bonds are its knowledge of the Polecat songs, a list of 12 barbershop classics that all barbershop singers are expected to know.

"Every barber shopper knows the 12 Polecat songs," Sandman said. "If you go to Sweden, they'll know those songs."

"Theoretically, any barber shopper could step up at any time and sing those songs," Wurst added.

Bandstand's repertoire is not limited to that list. The group has a growing list of more than 50 songs they regularly rehearse, as well as an extensive collection of Christmas songs.

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December is typically their busiest time of the year and they have already begun booking dates for private parties and public events where they can show off their Christmas collection. Their work as a group has allowed them to perform in a variety of places across the state and New England, including at the Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art, a parade float in Montville and as part of a documentary for Connecticut Public Television.

They have also earned the title of 2013 Senior Champions in the Yankee Division Barbershop Contest.

"The rules for that one was nobody could be under 55 and your age had to total a certain number. We had no problem getting that," Wurst said with a laugh.

Booking gigs is a plus, but having the opportunity to sing is what brings them the most joy.

"It's just something that we love to do," D'Amore said. **RHL**

For more information on booking Bandstand call 860-228-9043 or email damorechef1@cox.net.

Michael D'Amore of Rocky Hill has been delighting audiences as the lead singer of Bandstand, a barbershop quartet.

Photo by Lisa Brisson

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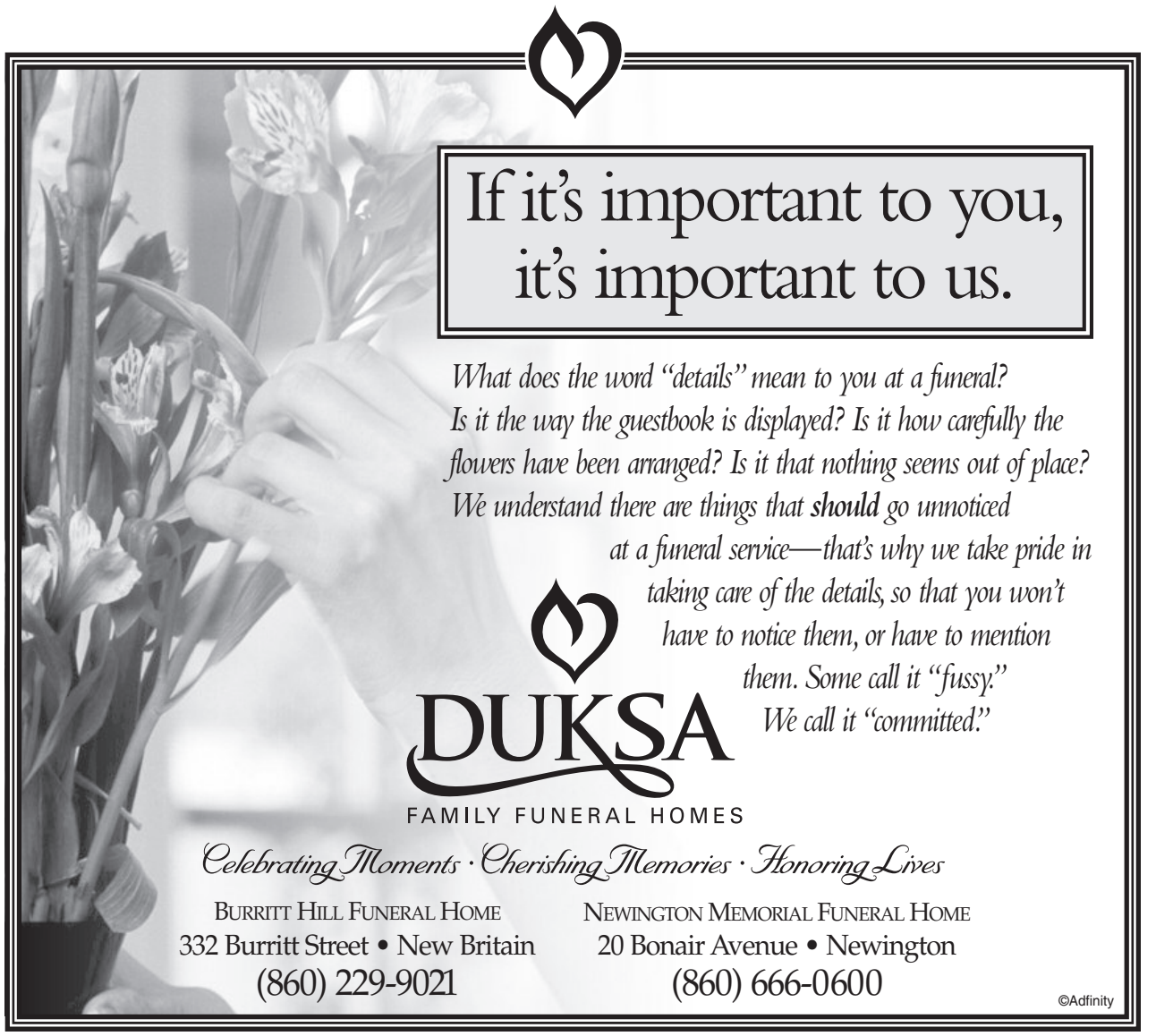

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Council tackles budget

Town manager proposes $74.1 million revenue and spending plan

by Mark Jahne
Editor

The Town Council is currently knee deep in its annual budget deliberations. All of the line items under consideration add up to $74,104,034.

That's the amount Town Manager Guy Scaife has proposed for town government operations and public education. It includes capital improvements, debt service and employee benefits.

If approved as submitted – an unlikely scenario – this would represent an 8.1 percent increase, or $5.5 million, over the current budget year that ends June 30. Scaife's plan has an increase of 8.6 percent for the schools and 7.4 percent on the town side and would translate to a mill rate increase from 29.7 to 31.8.

As is the case in many other area towns, grand list growth is small. It only rose 0.8 percent this past year, a value of $567,320.

Health care costs stand to rise because of a high volume of claims that are up 44 percent, driving a 15 percent cost increase in that line item. Scaife noted in his budget message that there are no options to the large increase in debt service.

In addition, the number of retires increased. Scaife said town employees are paying more of the cost of their insurance plans and assured the council that they do not have a "Cadillac" health insurance benefit. He added that the school board is gradually moving its employees into high-deductible health savings accounts.

He encouraged the council to maintain a 6 percent fund balance to cover unexpected costs and emergencies.

"We have a favorable tax base here compared to neighboring towns, but likewise we have needs," he said.

The schools are looking for more staff and additional portable classrooms to cope with rising enrollment in the two elementary schools. Scaife wants to replace two aging dump trucks and two police cars.

"Those are critical to us," he said of the trucks and cruisers. "We don't have a lot of spare vehicles."

If a dump truck breaks, that's one less truck out plowing snow during a storm, for example.

The trucks in question are 25 and 30 years old and require an increasing amount of maintenance to keep them on the road. He's also looking to "right size" the fire department, as approved by voters at referendum, reducing the size of its fleet from nine apparatus to six. Those six will be able to perform multiple functions.

"We made a monumental step last year in locking in a fleet replacement plan," Scaife said.

He added that it is important to stay the course with the plan to replace older town vehicles and predicted that the cycle will improve over time. Another priority is to hire an additional full-time police dispatcher.

"We're running extremely high overtime [in dispatch] and there are shifts where we have only one person on," he said.

Scaife is proud that town departments absorbed $512,000 in cuts in the current budget without any loss of service to the public.

Scaife included money in the budget to start the process of repairing or replacing the swimming pool at Elm Ridge Park, though he is not proposing to do the work this coming year. The pool is 48 years old and nearing the end of its projected life.

"We knew it was going to be a tough budget year. We as a council are going to have a tough job," Mayor Claudia Baio said, acknowledging that the school issues are significant in both scope and cost.

The Town Council must finalize and approve a budget no later than May 16. The new fiscal year begins July 1. **RHL**

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Richard Heath, CEO

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New location

DeNovellis Family Restaurant moves from Silas Deane to the west side of town

by Mark Jahne
Editor

Dignitaries and members of the DeNovellis family cut the ribbon to celebrate the new location of DeNovellis Family Restaurant at 944 Cromwell Ave.

The location has changed, but not the food. The DeNovellis family knows better than to mess up a successful formula.

DeNovellis Family Restaurant recently relocated from the Silas Deane Highway to 944 Cromwell Ave. Town officials and members of the Rocky Hill Chamber of Commerce stopped by March 22 to cut the ribbon and officially welcome the eatery to its new home.

It's truly a family affair, led by patriarch Enzo DeNovellis. Wife Deb and sons David and Devin are all part of the business. Weekend reservations have been hard to come by most nights since the move and the family firmly believes that's a tribute to the food and service patrons enjoy.

Deb said the new location features a much larger bar and lounge. The dining area is also larger – it can handle 150 people at once – and includes a private room with a capacity of 24.

The parking area has more spaces than the previous spot and the new location is near the Town Center West development, which the owners believe will provide them with a good deal of business when it opens. Also close by are two hotels and the Century Hills development.

Enzo opened the restaurant 10 years ago. He had plenty of prior background in food service, including at Franklin Giant Grinder in the South End of Hartford, run by some cousins.

"It's all I've ever done. It's an up-and-coming town. It's growing. The location is prime and I needed more space," he said. "The whole family is involved. I love to prepare food. You've got to love to cook."

Enzo's favorite cuisine is the hot and spicy variety. One such example on the menu is chicken Casa Loma, a recipe carried on from the former Hartford restaurant of that name.

David has been involved since the business opened in 2006. Like his father, his entire career has been spent in the food service at such local dining spots as Steve's Place and Franklin Giant Grinder.

"I love to prepare food. You've got to love to cook."

–Enzo DeNovellis

He said with regard to the public's response to the new location, "It's even more than we expected."

"Officially, as of today, I am a chef, his brother Devin said proudly.

He successfully completed the program at Lincoln Culinary School and worked under the guidance of nationally renowned Chef Tyler Anderson of Millwrights in Simsbury.

Devin works as a line cook with another chef at DeNovellis. Deb serves as hostess and David helps with food prep and front of the house tasks. Everyone works to ensure that each and every visit leaves patrons well fed and happy.

"Our biggest thing is consistency. We reflect the food that we ate growing up," Devin said.

Business is booming at dinner, so his focus is on attracting more people in the middle of the day.

"I'd like to see 80 to 100 lunches coming through the door," he said.

The dinner menu starts with a wide array of appetizers, including hot and cold antipasto plates. Guests can select from numerous veal, chicken, seafood and pasta entrees, as well as grilled strip steak and prime rib on Saturdays.

Traditional and designer pizzas can be ordered as well as several dinner salads and grinders. Take-out orders are welcome.

They do spread their wings a bit when planning the nightly special. One recent example is smoked duck gnocchi.

David smiled as he looked around the dining room.

"I have more pride in this place [than the last one] because the décor matches the quality of the food," he said. **RHL**

Business hours are 11 a.m. to 9 p.m. Tuesday through Friday, 5-9:30 p.m. Saturday and 5-9 p.m. Sunday. To learn more, or to make a reservation, call 860-563-4474 or see denovellisrestaurant.com.

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Photos by Mara Dresner

Catherine Tierney recently moved Coconuts Tanning Salon & Boutique to a new location on Cromwell Avenue.

Coconuts moves to a new location

Adds a smoothie bar and spa services to its offerings

by Mara Dresner
Staff Writer

It has only moved a mile down the road, but customers will find major differences when they walk into the new Coconuts Tanning Salon & Boutique.

The business, which was located on New Britain Avenue, moved to a new Cromwell Avenue location at the end of January.

"We're trying to develop a one-stop-shop sort of thing. We've always had UV tanning and we also did airbrush tanning, and we had a waxing studio. Now we've added a day spa," said owner Catherine Tierney.

That includes a massage therapist, aesthetician, lash bar, pedicures, manicures and more.

"Three people have their own businesses here and lease their space. They have their own businesses under the Coconuts umbrella," she said. "We're also affiliated with a doctor who does Botox, Juvederm and all that."

Even if you're not looking for any pampering, you can now just stop in for a snack.

"We're very, very excited about our all natural GMO-free smoothie bar. We do everything from fruit smoothies to frappes to chai tea to iced coffees to meal replacement smoothies. We have protein, everything from whey proteins to plant proteins for our vegans and vegetarians," said Tierney.

She added that there are several organic choices on the menu.

"All of our products are freeze-dried, which people are learning about that, it locks the nutrition in. The nutrition value is very high."

Customers can also choose add-in supplements for specific concerns, such as joint health or to bolster the immune system. So far, Tierney said it's been a hit.

"It's a really nice all-around addition to our business. We're really very happy. We opened on one of the coldest days of year. It was minus-2 and we sold six smoothies," she said.

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"It's super-duper exciting."

The smoothie bar is open seven days a week during regular operating hours. The business also features a boutique, primarily with women's accessories, such as jewelry, scarves and purses.

While the previous location had a boutique, Tierney is planning to expand the product line, which she said offers a variety of styles from traditional to trendy.

The timing of the move and the new location worked out well for her.

"I've always had the idea of expanding my business. When I started to compare apples to apples what was going on with the rent, this just made a lot more sense," she said.

It's right off the exit [of I-91]. I'm excited about the new apartments. I'm excited about the new restaurants coming this way. This was where the opportunity was to expand and expand successfully."

The new location at 3,200 square feet is triple the size of the former site. Her business has been open since 2007 and Tierney takes great pride in knowing her customers and making sure that they have a good experience.

"I just love working with people and taking care of their needs."

–Catherine Tierney

"We're 'Smart Tan' certified. It's not like when you're going to a gym and none of their people are qualified for tanning," she said.

For example, if someone is extremely fair skinned, they would not be allowed to tan.

"We scrutinize our clients. We want everyone to be safe and healthy. We're sticklers for that. We really assess them as to how many minutes they can do. It's our call. It's the right way to do it," she said.

Tierney most enjoys interacting with clients.

"I just love working with people and taking care of their needs. Our customers are always happy. We just strive to make them happy and comfortable here," she said.

"We're very friendly; it's very homey, very relaxed. Everyone is welcome and everybody feels at home here."

Some clients travel quite a distance for their services, such as Joan Solmonson, who lives in Colchester.

On a recent day, she was in for "two different massages and also tanning. And I also shop the boutique," she said with a laugh.

"What I love is the multi-sensory approach to relaxation and stress reduction, all the things a woman needs to reduce her stress. The people are warm and welcoming," she added.

"The whole atmosphere is very, very warm and soothing. Everything about the experience is great." **RHL**

Coconuts Tanning Salon & Boutique is located at 825 Cromwell Ave. Call 860-257-8118 or see coconutstanning.com.

Coconuts Tanning Salon & Boutique features a small boutique section with women's jewelry and accessories.

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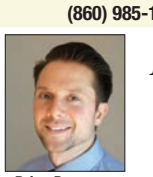

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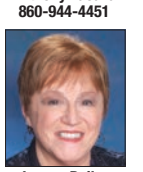

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Soaps, candles and more

Local couple launches new business

by Mara Dresner
Staff Writer

One quickly senses when looking through the product line from the Welles House Marketplace that the company's owners have a sense of humor.

In addition to the usual scents you would find from a company that makes candles, soaps and other natural products, such as lemon verbena and satsuma, you'll also find products with names like Gray, Black Tie and Monkey Farts.

The latter features a scent of fresh banana blended with sweet grapefruit, mandarin orange, kiwi, coconut cream, pink raspberries, strawberries and apples, in a soap that contains Shea butter, cocoa butter and mango butter.

"[Monkey Farts] has become a huge success. It was just so silly. We thought 'We don't really have anything silly. I wonder how that would work.' We made five batches and sold them in like two months. We were very surprised," said Brendan Grimaldi.

He runs the company with his spouse Mike Jakubowski. This year they plan a seasonal line around the concept, such as Cupid's Farts with a peppermint scent.

They chose the company name because of their home, which was built in 1774 and was originally owned by Thomas Welles.

"The Welles House Marketplace specializes in handmade natural products made with the highest quality of ingredients. We strive to produce a product with outstanding quality while remaining affordable," Jakubowski said.

The couple, who have been married for two years, got started on the project this past winter.

"We always talked about how we'd love to do something fun on the side and see where it goes. What it was, we never really had an idea. We definitely wanted it to be something fun and unique," said Grimaldi, a Rocky Hill High School graduate who works full time as a graphic designer for Prudential Retirement.

"We kind of had an itch to be a little crafty and do something far out of what we had normally done. When you do something all day every day – I do graphic design – it's not necessarily what I want to do when I get home. We wanted to do something different that's not in our everyday lives, something we could create and something that there's actually a market for," he added.

"I've always been a big fragrance person. I've always had 10 colognes on my counter. Any time we got a candle, we always have lively debates on which one we're going to get.

"Small businesses and handmade is almost becoming a movement. Everybody is starting to look for something more artisan, something that really is small batch. Some of the candles and soap I make, I might make three at a time. I might have a specific fragrance with a specific wax in these jars. We thought, 'Why not us? Let's give it a shot.'"

Neither had any experience in making such products when they first started buying supplies and experimenting with a few recipes last year.

"[We wanted] just to see if we could actually do it. Were we thinking we were capable of something totally crazy? We tested it out at home; we burned some candles; we used some soaps; we gave them to our moms. We asked them, 'How does this smell? Does it work?' After we tested it out, we had a little confidence," Grimaldi said.

"We decided we would start this side business together. We started coming up with so many ideas of what we could do, we had to start paring down that list to start so we wouldn't get too crazy, and we started creating the products."

They sell their products – bar and liquid soaps, lip balms, candles, wax melts, lotions and body sprays – through their website, on Etsy and at the Old Wethersfield Country Store.

"They're in a great price range and they're really great grab-and-go gifts. The candles are great if you're having company over and want to throw something nice in the bathroom just because the packaging is beautiful, too," said Megan Kirk, co-owner, Old Wethersfield Country Store.

"We like carrying them because they're local."

She added the soaps with amusing names are especially big sellers.

"Customers really like the funny soaps," she said. "People like them a lot."

Jakubowski, who is from East

Granby and works as a product analyst for Travelers, said that he and Grimaldi divide some responsibilities and work together on others.

"We share some of the duties, such as ordering supplies, brainstorming ideas, running our Etsy store, and keeping inventory. When it comes to the products, each of us, more or less, specialize in certain items. My areas are the bar soaps, pet shampoos and lip balms; while Brendan works with the candles and wax melts, liquid soaps, lotions and sprays," he said.

"When we started to create our original lineup of scents, I would say our interests steered in different directions. We had scents that went across all products, but there were many that were unique to just the soaps or just the candles, etc.

"This actually turned out to be beneficial, as we were able to cast a wider net to see what scents were popular with our audience and which weren't catching on. Going into 2016, we have been tweaking our lineup to bring cohesion amongst the different products we carry as we learn more about our consumers and their preferences."

Even in their short life as a company, there have been some surprises.

"With anything new, we don't know if it will be a hit or a miss," Grimaldi said. "With the soaps, Midnight Woods, which is the men's scent, has been tremendous. Neither of us expected the men's scents to go as quickly. We're kind of surprised by that, but happily surprised."

Other scents take a while to catch on.

"One Christmas scent, Frasier Fir, it's a basic tree scent and it didn't really sell at first. We figured we wouldn't make too many after the first batch. Then we had to make nine batches after the first two weeks because they just flew," he said.

"Lotions have been surprisingly big as well. That's not something we've done as much of."

They change some scents seasonally and add additional products, such as beefing up their candle selection around the holidays.

"We wanted to have as robust a selection as possible," Grimaldi noted.

They name some products after local landmarks, such as the Wethersfield Cove, which lent its name to a body spray that is available for both men and women. Grimaldi said they try to limit the number of ingredients in their products.

"We definitely like to go as natural as possible. We use all essential oils. They're 100 percent pure fragrance oils. We use 100 percent pure waxes," he said.

"We make two different types of candles, paraffin and soy wax. We don't add any additives to just fill in. There's really no reason to add anything extra. [The product] should definitely speak for itself."

Grimaldi said they like interacting with their customers on Facebook and are happy to listen to recommendations.

"We did a questionnaire about what holiday scents would you like to see. One was cinnamon. That wasn't one I planned to do. This is small and this is local right now, so we said we're going to do a cinnamon and it was a great seller," he said.

They're hoping to expand into doing farmers markets and craft shows and expect to be at the Wethersfield Farmers Market this summer. The pair works on weekends and evenings to make the product.

"It's a lot of thinking ahead. You're really three months ahead of schedule," Grimaldi said.

He's looking forward to meeting customers in person at the farmers market.

"I definitely banked a lot of vacation days. Those are going to be full days off from my full-time job and it's going to be 100 percent focus on those days and probably even the day before," he said.

"And we might switch off weeks and obviously gauge after a few weeks, are people buying a lot of soaps and no candles? Are people buying candles and no soap? I think this is going to be our biggest learning year, which is exciting," he added.

"We always talked about how we'd love to do something fun on the side and see where it goes."

–Brendan Grimaldi

They're experimenting with offering special items, such as candles in a teacup for Mother's Day. They're even working with a bride-to-be to offer a customized soap and candle favor for a wedding and, for the second year, will offer a Relay for Life soap, with 100 percent of the net proceeds being donated to the American Cancer Society.

Brendan Grimaldi, left, and Mike Jakubowski are the founders of the Welles House Marketplace.

Courtesy photos

Jakubowski described the soap as a clean, soothing tropical fruit blend scent.

"Outside of the business, I am a big advocate for Relay for Life, and set up fundraisers throughout the year to raise funds for cancer research and support those in cancer treatment or post-treatment. I knew immediately that, with the business, I wanted to give back. We immediately started a fundraiser with the products to raise additional funds for our Relay for Life team," he said.

As they continue to develop new products, Grimaldi and Jakubowski focus on the quality of their merchandise.

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"We want something we're proud of, something people feel or use and say, 'This is really good,' and want to use again. And it's made in Wethersfield." **RHL**

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Students of the month

Griswold Middle School's leaders

by Allie Rivera
Staff Writer

Mia Aglieco and Jake Rajotte stand out from the crowd. Just ask the Connecticut Association of Boards of Education.

Each year, CABE honors two eighth grade students from each middle school across the state with its Leadership Award. Mia and Jake, both 13 and enrolled at Griswold Middle School, are the Rocky Hill award winners for this academic year.

"I was surprised, but I was excited," Mia said.

This award honors these eighth grade students for their willingness to take on challenges, capability to make difficult decisions and concern for others.

"It's mostly based on the teachers and what they see the students doing day to day," Rosemary Lentini, a school counselor at GMS, said. "These are two fantastic kids who were chosen."

Mia, who she described as a kind person and good leader, stood out from the crowd since her first day at Griswold.

"From the day she walked through those doors in sixth grade, she's been something special," Lentini said.

Mia considers education is an important part of her life. Her favorite subject is math, but she seeks to challenge herself in every class she takes.

"She's not just looking for the grade, she's looking for the knowledge," Lentini said.

In addition to Mia's dedication to her studies, she was also recognized by her teachers as someone who cares about others. For all three years of middle school, she has been involved with the Best Buddies and Unified Sports programs that seek to pair students who have special needs with their typical peers for social and athletic interactions, respectively.

"When I came in sixth grade it was a really small program," Mia said of Unified Sports. "I like helping people, I like how that feels, so I told my friends you have to come."

She was inspired to participate in Unified Sports and Best Buddies because her older brother Zac, now 18, also participated, but since then she has developed her own love of the programs.

"The best part is the athletes' smiles and seeing the joy in their faces when they play," she said.

Along with her efforts through Unified Sports, she is also an athlete both in her school and her town.

"My family is a soccer family," she said. "Both of my siblings play and I just love the sport."

Mia has been playing in the town Parks and Recreation soccer league since her preschool days and now serves as captain of the school soccer team. It's a position she earned by writing an essay on why she wanted the title and then being chosen by her coach.

"We lead the team in our warm-up exercises and we help the coach," Mia said. "He will always look to the captains to tell him how everyone is doing and I wanted to be able to be a leader like that."

In addition to her work on the soccer team, she is also in her second year as part of the track team, and she's hoping to try out new forms of the sport.

"Last year I did short distance running, but this year I'm planning to do long distance," she said. "I like track because it motivates you to just run."

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"She's truly versatile in everything she does," Lentini said.

When she's not hitting the books or racing down the field, Mia enjoys spending time with her siblings Zac and Melaina, 20, or with her Shih Tzu named Spike.

Jake Rajotte, is similarly dedicated to his studies and was also commended for his desire to help others.

"He stands out as a leader," Lentini said. "He's always willing to help his peers and he cares about doing well."

Science is his favorite subject. His class recently began studying simple biology, such as heredity, which Jake said he found particularly interesting due to his father's work as a dentist.

His commitment to his studies and kindness toward other has not gone unnoticed.

"He's very respected by both his peers and his teachers," Lentini said.

Like Mia, Jake is an athlete with extensive soccer experience. He has participated in the sport since the age of 4 and now plays competitively with the Oakwood Soccer Club's Development Academy.

Griswold Middle School eighth-graders Jake Rajotte and Mia Aglieco, both 13, were honored as leaders in their school.

Photo by Allie Rivera

"I like how competitive it is, but it's also just fun to play with your friends," he said.

The academy program requires practices three times per week, plus a weekly game, and is believed to be the only program of its kind in Connecticut.

"What they're known for is helping you get into college," Jake said.

He also serves as a captain of the team and this allows him the chance to demonstrate his leadership abilities.

"I like to be a leader," he said. "On my soccer team, I'm the co-captain. If my teammates have a question, they ask me."

Because the team is the only one of its kind in the state, Jake and his teammates play against others from around the country and even around the world.

Last year, they had the opportunity to travel to Argentina for a 10-day experience.

"It was an 11-hour flight," Jake said. "When we were there, we had two practices a day and a game every other day."

At the end of the experience, he was able to stay with an Argentinian player and his family and learn a bit more about the culture.

"That part was really cool to see," Jake said. "He lived in a really nice apartment there."

Jake's soccer playing will most likely allow him to continue traveling in the coming years, although he does not know where yet.

"They think that next year we're either going to England, Germany or France," he said.

On the local level, the eighth-grader has also played basketball with the town Parks and Recreation team for three years.

"For me it's just a fun thing to do with my friends," he said.

The youngest of five siblings, the rest of whom are in their 20s or early 30s, he enjoys spending his free time outside in the park playing with friends. **RHL**

Jeremy Hwang, M.D., Ph.D.
Ophthalmology

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Dr. Hwang, an ophthalmologist, has joined the medical staff at Saint Francis Hospital and Medical Center.

Dr. Hwang received his medical degree from Columbia University College of Physicians and Surgeons, New York, New York. He completed his residency in ophthalmology at the Doheny Eye Institute, University of Southern California Medical Center, Los Angeles, and a fellowship in glaucoma at the Wilmer Eye Institute, Johns Hopkins University, Baltimore, Maryland.

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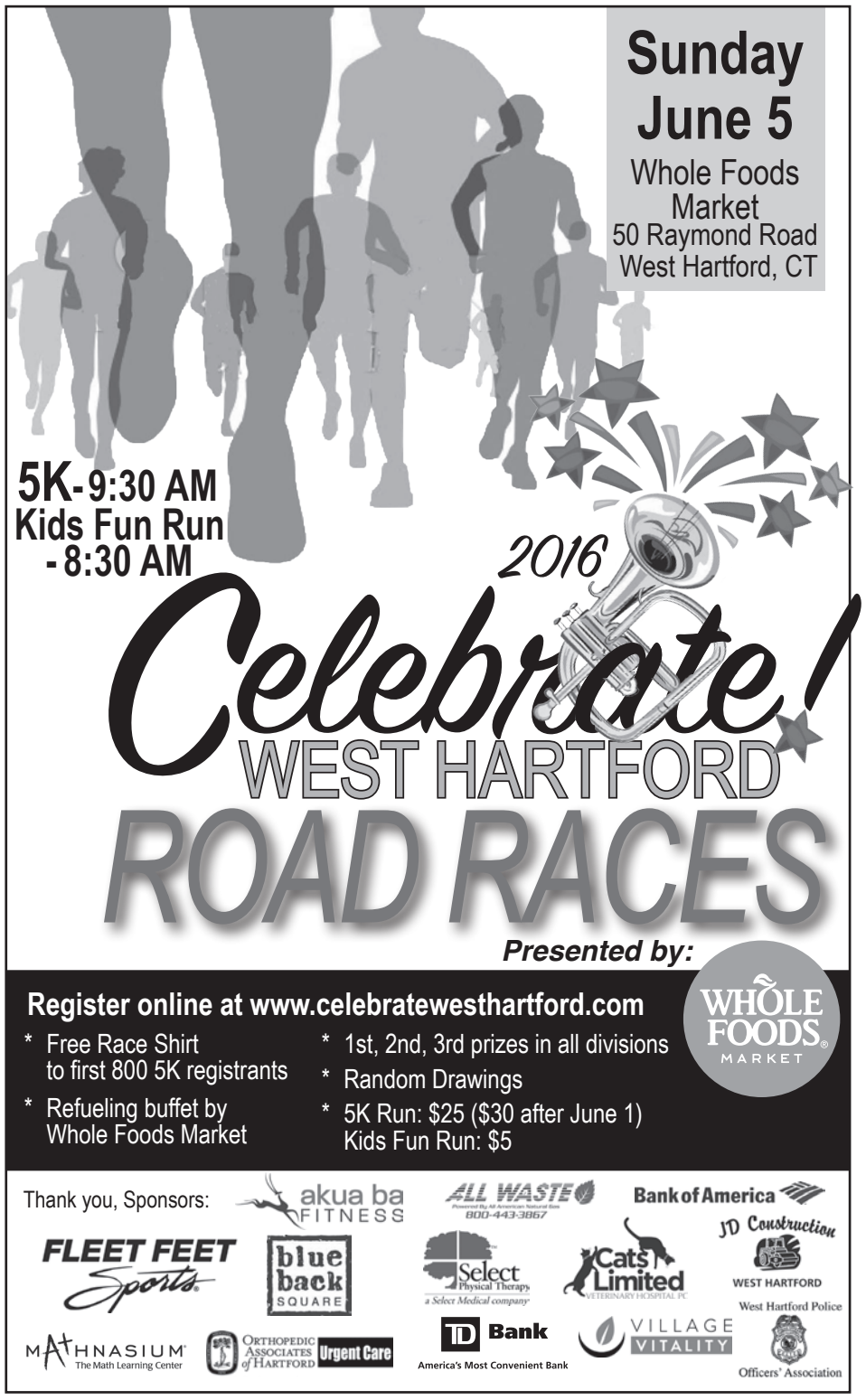

Stepping up

Police officers in two towns rally to support one of their own

by Mark Jahne
Staff Writer

By all accounts, Christopher Tyler, 28, is a fine young man and a highly professional law enforcement officer. He's also a tall and physically strong athlete who played Division I college football.

For the past year he has been battling a rare form of brain cancer that his father Clyde said almost never occurs in adults. But Chris refuses to let his illness get him down and still goes to work whenever he is healthy enough to do so.

He was diagnosed in the fall of 2015 and had the tumor surgically removed. Then came six weeks of daily radiation. Things were looking up when the cancer reappeared several weeks ago, according to his father.

Chris is a member of the West Hartford Police Department, following the example of several relatives who worked in law enforcement. He grew up in Rocky Hill, where his father was a police officer for 34 years before retiring in 2010 to fight his own battle against cancer caused by years of using a hand-held radar device to track speeders.

Chris attended local schools and graduated from Rocky Hill High School. He posted excellent grades and set school records in several sports while participating in football, indoor track and outdoor track. His proud father recalled his state championship in the shot put.

"He's a good person. Even when he was a little kid, he would stick up for kids who were being picked on," Clyde said.

He recalled his son coming to the aid of an Iranian immigrant who was being relentlessly harassed by other students at RHHS.

Chris earned an undergraduate degree from Stony Brook University and played tight end on its football team. He lives in West Hartford now with his wife Brittany and their son Braydon.

Lt. Ted Stoneburner, the head of community relations for the West Hartford police, called Chris a model officer, one of the best young cops in the department.

"He's a self-starter. He's up and coming in this department: sharp, sure, proactive," Stoneburner said. "He's a go-getter. He's smart. Everything he does, he does very well."

Chris joined the department in 2010 and has already been appointed to such select duties as SWAT team and field training officer. He also serves on the Community Interaction Team, a crime prevention unit that operates as an independent arm of the department to address areas where extra attention is needed to suppress criminal activity.

Stoneburner noted that appointment to CIT is only by the recommendation of higher-ranking officers. Many who have served in that unit over the years have gone on to become members of the WHPD command staff.

Stoneburner said one of the

ways Chris's fellow officers are assisting him is by donating the sick days allotted to them by contract to what is called a "sick bank." Their days can then be used by Chris so that he continues to get paid during those periods while he is on medical leave.

They are also covering his shifts when he is unable to work so that he can remain an active member of the department. His father said Chris has used up all of his sick time and most, if not all, of his vacation days.

"West Hartford, they couldn't do enough for him," a grateful Clyde said. "The first surgery was rough on him."

Virtually every member of the department visited Chris after his surgery, including the top brass. They cut his grass, trimmed the bushes and did anything else they could think of to help.

Doctors and hospitals in Hartford had so little experience with treating this particular form of adult cancer that the family opted to have him treated at the Dana-Farber Cancer Institute in

Christopher Tyler stands alongside his father, Clyde, a retired officer with the Rocky Hill Police Department.

Courtesy photo

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"Even when he was a little kid, he would stick up for kids who were being picked on."

–Clyde Tyler

Boston instead. Even that facility had only seen limited examples of this diagnosis.

Clyde said his son is a fighter who refuses to give in to his illness. The young man still works out under a physician's guidance and doesn't want to talk about his situation with anyone outside of the family. He declined to be interviewed for this story.

"He's always been a tough kid. He's got a very high pain tolerance," Clyde said.

Griffin Tyler, a cousin of Chris, established a GoFundMe page to help pay for the accumulating medical expenses. Clyde said the total raised in just four weeks was approaching $50,000.

Many local coaches and teachers are also donating money; Chris is the son of Barbara Tyler, a teacher at West Hill School. He also has a sister, Kelley. Lots of retired Rocky Hill cops gave money in honor of their service with Clyde. Current officers are doing the same.

"The Rocky Hill [police] union made a donation," he said.

"The union has reached out through the social media arena. Individual officers are making contributions," veteran Lt. Rob Catania said.

He worked with Clyde and has known Chris all his life.

"He's a fantastic kid," Catania said.

Clyde said Chris recently participated, to the best of his ability, with fellow WHPD officers in an annual SWAT Challenge. Attendees at the post-event dinner raised $5,000 for his family, an amount that was matched by Stag Arms, a New Britain-based gun manufacturer.

When Chris graduated from the police academy he was number one on the hiring list for multiple towns, according to his father. He selected West Hartford because of its reputation as one of the best municipal law enforcement agencies in Connecticut. **RHL**

Officer Christopher Tyler of the West Hartford Police Department is receiving plenty of support as he battles a rare type of brain cancer.

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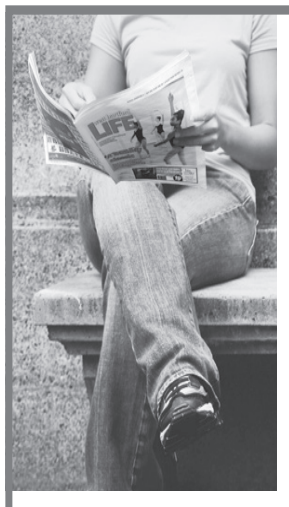

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Leading by example

Robert Downes becomes an Eagle Scout

by Mark Jahne
Editor

Robert Downes presents himself as a soft-spoken young man. The 16-year-old sophomore at Kingswood Oxford School became the most recent Rocky Hill resident to achieve Eagle Scout, the highest rank awarded by the Boy Scouts of America.

He became a Cub Scout at age 7 and has stuck with it ever since. Now a senior patrol leader, Robert belongs to Troop 244, which meets at fire/ambulance headquarters on Main Street.

Robert Downes, a member of Boy Scout Troop 244 in Rocky Hill, recently became an Eagle Scout, the highest rank in scouting. He is shown at the Court of Honor where the rank was officially presented.

The son of Robert Downes and Claudia Baio, he attended West Hill School and sixth grade at Griswold Middle School

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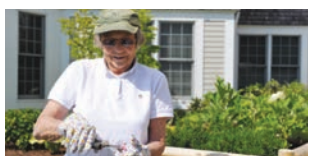

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Robert Downes affixes a mentor pin to Scout Master Frank Shank.

before enrolling at KO in West Hartford. He successfully passed his Eagle Scout Board of Review in November at the age of 15.

He's also involved with lacrosse and rowing at school and participates in jiu jitsu with his father.

"I play guitar with my school jazz combo," Robert added of his various activities.

Every Eagle Scout candidate must complete a service project that includes leading a team of volunteer workers and he selected an environmental cleanup of the Old 1860 Reservoir in the southwest part of Wethersfield, which was carried out with the guidance of the Wethersfield Parks and Recreation Department.

The project was a good fit for Robert, who said what he enjoys most about scouting is, "being in the outdoors; a chance to see nature in a more organized way."

Robert is particularly proud of the merit badge he earned for wilderness survival. Scouts are sent out for a night outside and may only take a trash bag and one personal item.

"I brought duct tape," he said.

The task was to construct some kind of a shelter in which he could sleep, so the combination of the trash bag and duct tape became a construction project. He said he made it through the night OK, other than being eaten alive by mosquitoes.

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Robert enjoys camporees and other scout competitions and attends Boy Scout camp in the summer.

He explained that one of the requirements of his Eagle project was to demonstrate leadership by organizing and supervising the work of his volunteers.

"Our troop has about 15 active people and I was able to get 11 of them to show up," he said.

Those fellow scouts, in turn, brought an additional eight friends. That gave him a good-sized work crew and they set right to the task.

The Old 1860 Reservoir is bordered in part by homes and is considered an attractive natural setting, but some people treat it as a dumping ground, so Robert's team started by removing all of the debris, ranging from miscellaneous litter to a toilet tank.

"For the most part, it was non-natural debris," he said. "It was kind of sad to see."

They filled 15 50-gallon trash bags that were then carted away for proper disposal.

The scouts and friends also blazed a few trails and ripped out invasive species, particularly a type of water lily that had run rampant in some areas. During the days they spent at the reservoir, they saw a variety of wildlife including rabbits, ducks, swans, frogs, beavers and snakes.

"Eagle [project] shows what your own hard work can do," Robert said, adding of scouting overall, "It certainly teaches you skills: how to be a leader, how to be organized, how to talk to other people."

State Superior Court Judge Marshall Berger, a longtime Boy Scout leader, is proud of all Robert Downes has accomplished in scouting.

Courtesy photo

"It certainly teaches you skills, how to be a leader, how to be organized, how to talk to other people."

–Robert Downes

He is already looking ahead to college, where he plans to study either pathology or archaeology. His first choice is Tulane University in New Orleans. Other favorites are Yale University and Trinity College in Hartford.

Scout Master Frank Shank had high praise for Robert, who he said has achieved at least 40 merit badges.

"He has more merit badges than any other boy I ever had," Shank said. "He teaches the other boys all the skills. He's a really good scout."

He added that Robert excels in all of the key qualities of scouting: citizenship, physical fitness and character development, and that he did well planning, executing and leading his Eagle project team.

Despite being a bit shy, Shank said Robert has come to excel at public speaking and his accomplishments add to the legacy of Troop 244.

"We've had a lot of Eagle Scouts come out of this troop," he said. **RHL**

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He lives to ride

Frank Catania will pedal to raise funds in Pan-Mass Challenge

by Mark Jahne
Editor

Frank Catania is ready to tackle the Pan-Mass Challenge ride in memory of his mother, Theresa, who passed away in 2003.

Frank Catania loves to ride a bicycle. He owns five of them, including a prized custom-made model.

This summer, the long-time Rocky Hill resident will roll across Massachusetts in the annual Pan-Mass Challenge to raise funds for the Dana-Farber Cancer Institute.

"As a kid, I always rode a bicycle," said the self-employed carpenter. "In 2009, I took up cycling as a way of staying healthy and getting back out there."

"I ride very aggressively. The safest way to ride is to kind of be a car."

– Frank Catania

Photos by Lisa Brisson

The Provincetown finish line of the Pan-Mass Challenge.

Courtesy photo

His brother gave him a mountain bike, so Catania needed to purchase a helmet. That experience eventually led to him to acquire an Italian racing bike – a frame with custom-specified components.

"When I had the mountain bike, I would ride three or four days a week," he said.

His riding frequency increased when he switched to the new bike.

"During the good weather I ride five times a week," he said.

Catania even rides in the winter, as long as the temperature is at least 45 degrees. He has to keep a lookout for holes in the pavement and loose gravel that can cause a flat tire or a fall. He uses an indoor trainer on colder days.

"I ride very aggressively. The safest way to ride is to kind of be a car," he said.

The year before last, he attended a birthday party and met another avid cyclist who told him all about the Pan-Mass Challenge.

"He told me how unbelievable it is, such an emotional event," he said. "It takes place over two days. It's also a $4,500 commitment."

The challenge is a 192-mile bicycle tour that starts in Sturbridge, Massachusetts, and ends in Provincetown on the tip of Cape Cod. Riders can choose one of several courses to follow. It's not a race. Overnight accommodations after the first day of riding are provided at the

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–Frank Catania

Massachusetts Maritime Academy in Bourne.

Catania is a member of the Forza G team. This year, the team plans to undertake a longer ride, from Lenox near the New York border to Provincetown, a distance of 300 miles.

"Last year, there were 6,200 cyclists and 4,000 volunteers," he said. "You meet a lot of people along the way."

The ride goes off rain or shine and supporters line the entire route. It takes an hour and 15 minutes just to get every rider started. Some of them have participated in the challenge for as many as 30 years.

There are rest stops every 20 miles or so, where cyclists can use the bathroom, have some food and beverages, seek treatment of an injury or help with a broken bike.

Married and a father of four, he considers it important to help Dana-Farber treat patients and conduct research toward a final cure. His mother died of leukemia in 2003 at the age of 57 and his father is a prostate cancer survivor. Neighbors on both sides of his home are currently battling the illness.

"It's very near and dear to me," he said.

While the ride is enjoyable and invigorating, the whole idea is to raise funds for Dana-Farber.

"For me, it's about raising the money. One hundred percent of every dollar raised through this event goes to Dana-Farber, unrestricted," Catania said. "PMC is the largest contributor to Dana-Farber. It's the largest athletic fundraising event in the country."

Last year, he brought in $5,436.50, and this year's goal is $7,500. He has about 30 percent of that amount pledged thus far. Anyone interested in donating to the Pan-Mass Challenge in Frank Catania's name may do so at www.pmc.org/fc0044. **RHL**

Frank Catania rides a custom-built Italian racing bicycle. He will participate in the Pan-Mass Challenge this summer to raise money for the Dana-Farber Cancer Institute.

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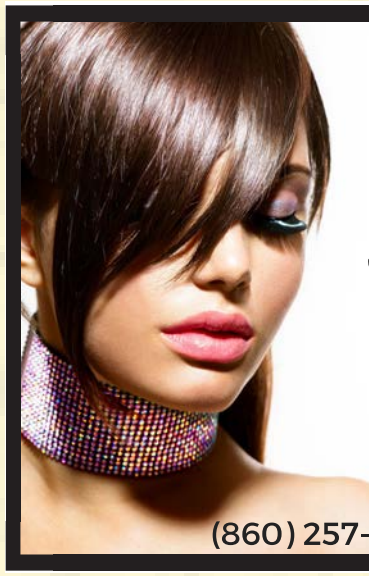

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Executive Director Susan Moores and Patrick Royce, head of maintenance, are the only employees of the Rocky Hill Housing Authority. They are shown at its 36 Willow Road complex.

Photo by Mark Jahne

A place to call home

Rocky Hill Housing Authority offers inexpensive apartments for older people

by Mark Jahne
Editor

Senior citizens of low or modest income may find it difficult to afford a house, condominium or apartment. They may no longer be able to take care of the home where they have long lived.

This creates a huge stress factor in their lives. The Rocky Hill Housing Authority provides an option that puts a roof over their heads at a reasonable price.

The quasi-governmental agency oversees a total of 70 units in town, 40 at its 36 Willow Road property and another 30 at the nearby Harold J. Murphy complex. Each of these residential neighborhoods also offers a community center.

To qualify, people must be 62 or older. Younger people with disabilities can also live there. Income guidelines must also be met at a threshold of total personal wealth of $45,100. The rent cannot exceed 30 percent of a tenant's income.

"We also have a spend down for their medical expenses," Executive Director Susan Moores said.

RHHA is subsidized by the state and also applies for grants whenever possible. It does not receive any tax revenue from the town.

Both complexes are run by Moores, with the help of the only other staff member, Patrick Royce, who handles all upkeep and maintenance issues.

"We only have one-bedroom [units] here," Moores said.

All are a single floor layout. Each unit has a pair of medical pull cords tenants can yank in the event of an emergency.

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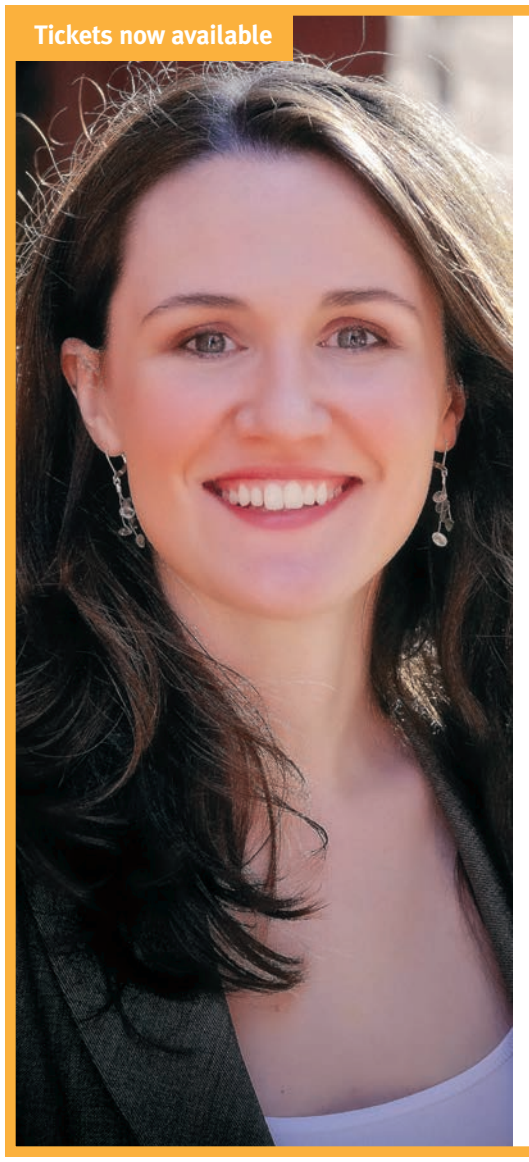

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Housing authority tenants also live in the nearby Harold J. Murphy complex on School Street.

Photo by Mark Jahne

The complexes are considered independent housing. If tenants need home care assistance or meals on wheels, for example, they can make their own arrangements.

For those who no longer drive, transportation is available through local Dial-a-Ride and the Greater Hartford Transit District.

The units are quite popular, Moores said, noting that the waiting list, which is now closed, includes five years worth of people. One does not have to be a Rocky Hill resident to apply.

"I have applications from all over; other states, too," Moores said. "The people I get, they just can't take care of their homes anymore."

Some of them have lost their primary source of income. Others are frail. Still others may have fallen victim to foreclosure. No one is admitted to a RHHA unit without first passing a State Police background check.

Pets are not allowed, except for service dogs.

Some housing authorities participate in federal programs like Section 8; Rocky Hill does not. The RHHA does not accept any federal dollars, other than occasional grants that are funneled down to the state.

Although the town does not provide any funding, Moores said it is supportive in many other ways and the authority is governed by a board of commissioners appointed by the Town Council.

"We have a good rapport with the town," she said.

Four years ago, Moores successfully applied for a $750,000 Small City Development Block Grant from the federal government to perform badly needed repairs and upgrades to the Willow units. She is now seeking another such grant, this time for $800,000, to do the same at Murphy.

"The sole purpose is for housing renovations," she said.

The lifelong Rocky Hill resident is working with a grant consultant in hopes of securing this money. Many units at Murphy have original furnishings and the alarm system is so old and faulty that it often is triggered by the simple act of cooking, causing the fire department to make many unnecessary emergency visits.

It's a calculated risk, because money is tight, but she contended the units need new roofs and have too many maintenance problems related to age to allow things to continue the way they are.

"We had to put a substantial amount of money out of pocket for an architect and engineer," Moores said. "We are in desperate need up there. We can't simply put Band-Aids on anymore."

The Willow Road properties were built in 1977 and the Murphy residences were constructed in 1988. All units are monitored 24/7 in case of emergency. Energy efficiency upgrades were recently implemented thanks to a grant from Eversource.

"We are in desperate need up there. We can't simply put Band-Aids on anymore."

–Susan Moores

Ken Goldberg, who has been chairman of the housing authority for 37 years, well knows the properties and their needs. When the School Street complex was constructed it was with the explicit intent of creating additional senior housing in town, he explained.

Goldberg likes the mix of people in the authority's two properties and hopes RHHA can secure additional funding to better serve their needs. He pointed out that housing authorities are considered political subdivisions of state government.

"It allows people to find reasonable housing. They are small units, but it's a good complex," he said. "We keep the place well maintained."

He is pleased with the job Moores has done over the years.

"She's very good, works very diligently," Goldberg said.

Before becoming a public housing administrator, Moores worked in substance abuse and psychological counseling. She is certified as a crisis worker by the American Association of Suicidology and has trained workers with the state Department of Children and Families and other agencies.

Moores enjoys working on behalf of her tenants.

"I've been here five and a half years. I love it," she said. **RHL**

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LIFE in the classroom

One-to-one technology initiative still strong after year one

by Allie Rivera
Staff Writer

With the school year beginning to wind down, teachers at Griswold Middle School are taking the time to look back at the school's first year with the new one-to-one technology program.

Each student was provided with a Chromebook computer for educational purposes.

"You know, the first year of any initiative you learn along the way, so it's been going well," Katie DeLoureiro said. "The great thing about the Chromebooks is they open up the classroom to the world outside."

She is the instructional technology facilitator for the Rocky Hill Public Schools. According to DeLoureiro, Chromebooks are a bit different from traditional laptops, although they look the same.

"A Chromebook is a simple device that is similar to a laptop in that it has a keyboard," DeLoureiro explained.

"What makes it different is that it runs via the web. It's all online. There is no downloading software, no CD-ROM drive. It runs via apps, similar to a mobile device or tablet, but it does have a keyboard."

Every GMS student was provided with one of these devices at the beginning of the year specifically for educational purposes, and according to DeLoureiro, teachers jumped at the chance to use the technology in the classroom.

"Right now I'm working with a social studies teacher who is talking to kids about interactive research and there's a Spanish class that was able to do virtual tours of San Antonio," DeLoureiro said.

"Even in music class, she was using a program called Kahoot where students all look to the board for a question and get immediate feedback. You wouldn't believe how excited students were on topics that typically may not have gotten them excited before."

According to DeLoureiro, the most helpful aspect of the one-to-one program has been the implementation of Google Classrooms. This is an online learning environment that allows teachers and students to communicate electronically as well as post class notes, homework updates and any other pertinent information pertaining to student learning.

"Now instead of just paper and pencil, teachers are able to scan a document and send it to students, but they can still highlight, mark up and submit their work all online," she said. "The devices allow us to communicate and collaborate far easier."

By having many aspects of classroom work online, students are able to stay up to date with their lessons, even when they aren't able to attend school.

"I talked to one student who had to take a trip to Ohio earlier in the

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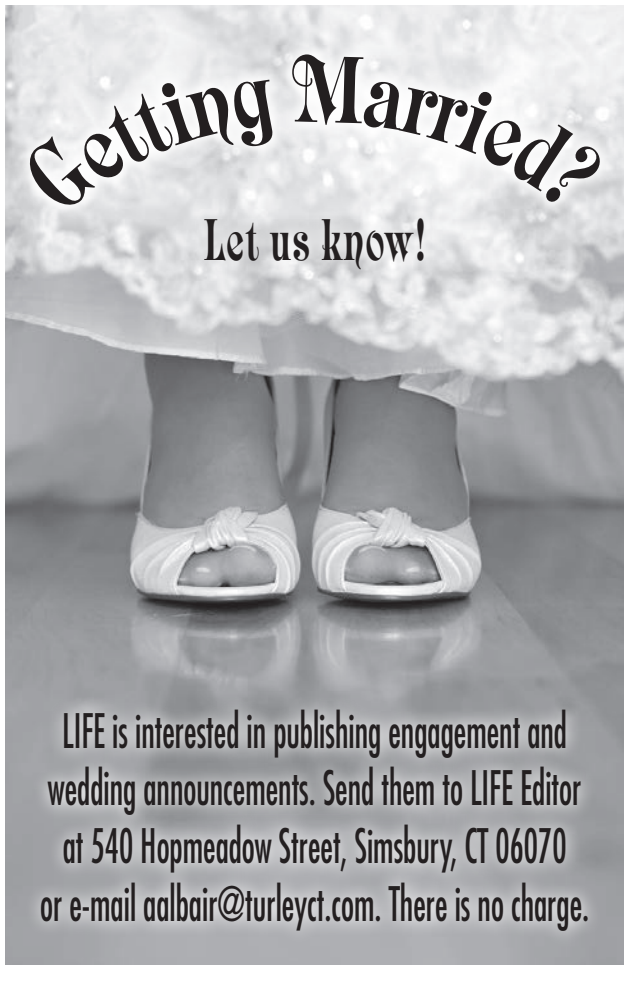
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year and, despite being out of school for a couple of days, she was able to know what was going on back in the classroom here," DeLoureiro said. "She came into school not saying 'what did I miss?,' but instead she said 'I saw that you posted this.'"

"Organizationally, Google Classroom has totally revolutionized how we can communicate with kids," GMS Spanish teacher Rachel Miller said. "Absent? It's online. Don't have the notes? It's online. Don't know what the homework is? It's online. There's kind of no excuses anymore."

By having so much work accessible online, both teachers and students have noticed a decrease in paper usage this year.

"Google Classroom lends itself to being a paperless environment," DeLoureiro said. "We, of course, do still use paper in the school, but a lot of teachers have said they're using a lot less."

Through the one-to-one initiative, teachers have also had the opportunity to explore new apps and other pieces of technology and figure out what will work best in their own classroom. Although DeLoureiro said many are embracing this technology, it is not mandatory.

"If they still want to use paper and pencil, they can, this is just giving them more options," she said. "This technology is just another tool. It's not taking over the entire classroom, it's adding to it."

Miller is one such teacher who has embraced the use of the Chromebooks in her classroom, utilizing such apps as Quizlet and Duolingo on a regular basis.

"With these they can learn it at their own pace and get instant corrections and feedback," she said.

In recent weeks, Miller also used the technology to have her students take virtual tours of a city they were studying.

"I found this really cool interactive website about San Antonio and it really grasps their interest," she said. "This same information is in this really old textbook, or it's also here on the screen, and each kid can explore it in their own way."

Going into the school year, DeLoureiro said that a common concern that was raised was making sure that students were using the technology appropriately. Some issues of misuse have come up, but for the most part the devices are being used as intended.

"Some people definitely sometimes misbehave on the Chromebooks, but most kids use them for what is right," seventh grade student Madeline Guerrera said. "We have access to a lot of apps and we're able to accomplish a lot of work."

To address those instances of misuse, DeLoureiro said the school and the district as a whole are trying to create new guidelines about the use of technology.

"We are in the process of trying to incorporate more into our library media curriculum and our technology curriculum to include topics that involve digital citizenship. It's not an end-all, be-all, but it's one way to address these concerns," she said.

"We're working on covering it in younger ages as well, for kids even as young as kindergarten," she added. "This is our world now."

For those who get to use the technology every day, its implementation has opened the door to a new approach to education.

"You wouldn't believe how excited students were on topics that typically may not have gotten them excited before."

–Katie DeLoureiro

"It's like a whole new set of learning," Madeline said. "We're able to do so much more."

For Miller, this first year was just the beginning of what she plans to do with the new technology.

"There's so many ways to utilize it in the classroom," she said. "I feel like there's so much more that I could do and I haven't even scratched the surface." **RHL**

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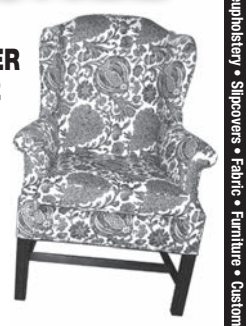

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Students at West Hill School held their annual Invention Convention the evening of March 31. They spent several weeks in preparation before showing off their creations to faculty and family.

Photos by Mark Jahne

Invention Convention sparks creativity at West Hill School

Third-grader Lauren Halia explained her Zoup Cool invention to teacher Ann Gombatz. The device is designed to keep food fresh and cool.

West Hill students, from left, Ilakkiya Tamilarasu, Kyra Girard and Varun Rajesh pose with teacher third-grade Jessica Gagnon.

Your thoughts:

This month we asked local residents:

"What do you like most about running?"

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– Mena Shehata

"Finishing."
– Lauren Harris

"The swag and the treats."
– Laura Montgomery

"It's my time all to myself."
– Sandy Fravel

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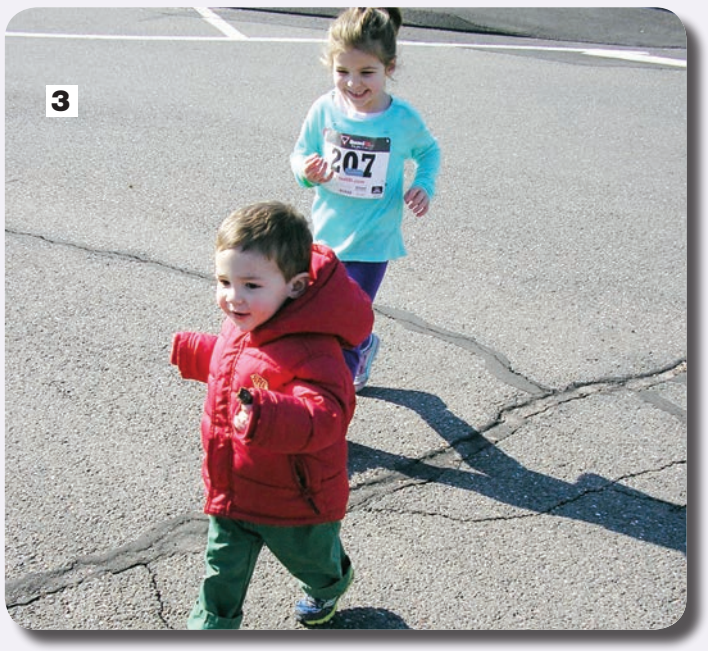
Slice of LIFE

photos by Mark Jahne



5K walk/race sponsored by Cora J. Belden Library

The Cora J. Belden Library sponsored a 5K walk/race the morning of April 9, beginning and ending at Griswold Middle School. Nearly 150 racers took part. There was also a shorter run for children. 1. A pack of runners turns the corner on Bailey Road into the Griswold Middle School driveway and nearby finish line. 2. Helping out at the library run are, from left, Children's Librarian Catherine Potter, Chris Mullins of the Friends of the Library and Ann Dobmeier, library staff member and Friends president. 3. Simone and Jack Guiditta held their own race in the school parking lot. 4. Library Director Mary Hogan and volunteer Carolyn Dobmeier unfold the finish sign. 5. Making sure everything ran smoothly are Joe Orlando of the Fire Police with Walt Sykes and Lisa Zerio of Rocky Hill Parks & Recreation.

Light It Up Blue

6. Children on the autism spectrum and their families participated in the local Light It Up Blue event marking April 2 as World Autism Awareness Day. They paid a visit to the police department and gathered around a cruiser, where Mayor Claudia Baio read a resolution from the Town Council. **7.** Zaisy Blackler feels what it's like to sit at the steering wheel of a police car. **8.** Sara Raymond, one of the department's school resource officers, welcomes the visitors to the squad room.

a new leash on LIFE

Meet Bunny and Jasper

Bunny is a 2-year-old Labrador retriever mix. She would do well in any type of home, but is best suited for one with children over 6. Other dogs are fine, but no cats. She has a lot of energy and needs daily exercise. Additional training is part of this adoption and the best match would be a family with prior large and active dog experience.

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May *calendar*

Su	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30	31				

2 Computer Explorers, 4 p.m., for grades K-2, Cora J. Belden Library, 33 Church St., 860-258-7621 or rockyhilllibrary.info, also May 9 and 16

3 Career Coaching, 10 a.m., Cora J. Belden Library

Toddler Time, 10:15 a.m., Cora J. Belden Library. also May 10 and 17

Knitting Group, 11 a.m., Cora J. Belden Library, also May 10, 17, 24 and 31

Creative Writing, 4:15 p.m., for grades 3-5, Cora J. Belden Library

Protect Your Online Privacy, 6:30 p.m., Cora J. Belden Library

CT Hearing Voices Network support group, 7 p.m., Rocky Hill Congregational Church, 805-817 Old Main St., second floor classroom, 203-391-4968, also May 10, 17, 24 and 31

4 Books & Babies, 10:15 a.m., Cora J. Belden Library, also May 11

Playgroup Plus, 10:15 a.m., Cora J. Belden Library, also May 11, 18 and 25

Preschool Math Club, 2 p.m., Cora J. Belden Library, also May 11

Crazy 8's Math Club, 4:15 p.m., for grades K-2, Cora J. Belden Library, also May 11

Minecraft Club, 5:30 p.m., for grades 6-12, Cora J. Belden Library, also May 11 and 18

Mystery Book Discussion, 6:30 p.m., Cora J. Belden Library

Volunteens, 6:30 p.m., Cora J. Belden Library

5 La Leche League, 10 a.m. to noon, 23 Textbook Ave., 860-529-2307 or mgubala@sbcglobal.net

Fun for Ones, 10:15 a.m., Cora J. Belden Library, also May 12

ESL Classes, 10:30 a.m., Cora J. Belden Library, also May 12, 19 and 26

Crafter School, 4:15 p.m., Cora J. Belden Library, also May 12

Family Make It, Take It, 6 p.m., Cora J. Belden Library, also May 12, 19 and 26

6 Mini Machines, 4 p.m., for grades 3-5, Cora J. Belden Library, also May 13

9 Family Story Time, 6:15 p.m., Cora J. Belden Library,

10 Getting Started With Windows 10, 2 p.m., Cora J. Belden Library, also May 17 and 24

Minecraft Club, 4 p.m., for grades 3-5, Cora J. Belden Library, also May 24

Check Out Cuba, 6:30 p.m., Cora J. Belden Library

11 Friends of the Library Board, 7 p.m., Cora J. Belden Library

Alzheimer's or Dementia Caregivers Support Group, 6 p.m., The Atrium at Rocky Hill, 1160 Elm St., 860-563-5588 or ehall@benchmarkquality.com

14 Alzheimer's or Dementia Caregivers Support Group, 2 p.m., The Atrium at Rocky Hill, 1160 Elm St., 860-563-5588 or ehall@benchmarkquality.com

Books Wars, 2 p.m., for ages 5 and older, Cora J. Belden Library

17 Bird Watching for Beginners (Part 1), 6:30 p.m., Cora J. Belden Library,

18 Cocoa & Crafts, 6 p.m. for grades 3-5, Cora J. Belden Library

20 LEGO Free Play, 10:30 a.m., Cora J. Belden Library

21 Bird Watching for Beginners (Part 2), 8 a.m., Ferry Park, 860-258-7621 or rockyhilllibrary.info

Rainbow Magic Book Club, 2 p.m., Cora J. Belden Library

25 Graphic Novel Book Club, 6 p.m., for grades 3-5, Cora J. Belden Library

FIRST Tech Challenge Robotics Demonstration, 6:30 p.m., Cora J. Belden Library

Is your club, community organization, school or house of worship holding an event open to the general public? If so, please send us the details for inclusion in our calendar. Email your events to Mark Jahne at mjahne@turleyct.com or mail them to Turley CT Community Publications, 540 Hopmeadow St., Simsbury, CT 06070.

From the mayor's desk

Taking note of autism and honoring volunteer firefighters

by Mayor Claudia Baio

Courtesy photo

Mayor Claudia Baio greets some of the town's fire safety personnel on Volunteer Firefighters Day.

This past month was another busy one, with a number of community events. You may have noticed the blue lights and banners along our streetscape. These are in recognition of Autism Awareness Month.

This was kicked off with the "light it up blue" ceremony at the police department. Officer Sara Raymond and Sgt. Steve Morgan did a great job in leading a tour for the kids and families involved in the event.

It occurred on the same day as Terrier Tough, an obstacle course race held at Elm Ridge Park as a fundraiser to raise money for the high school's annual trip to New Orleans to build for Habitat for Humanity.

Kudos to Principal Mario Almeida and his team of volunteers for their work on this event. Parks and Recreation employee Walt Sykes volunteered his time as well and did a great job, in particular digging up the trenches for the fun and muddy obstacle.

I had the pleasure of attending both events. Several ribbon-cuttings and other events were held as well demonstrating, the vibrancy of our town.

I also had the honor of accompanying Fire Chief Mike Garrahy and deputy mayor and former fire chief Joe Kochanek to the Connecticut Fire Chiefs' Association Summit. Following that was Volunteer Firefighters Day, with visits to all of our fire stations and fire museum. Our public safety folks do us proud.

The Rocky Hill Chamber of Commerce annual meeting and award ceremony was held April 21. Congratulations to all of the winners: Rookie of the Year Award, Jyoti Patel; Chamber Member of the Year Award, town Economic Development Director Raymond Carpentino; Business Member of the Year Award, Burris Logistics; Commitment to Education Award, Nutmeg State Financial Credit Union and Community Partner Award, Rocky Hill Police Department.

As many of you may be aware, we have embarked on our budget process. As promised, this month's column is to provide you with a brief description of the process. This is a challenging year for a variety of reasons. We have been working hard on the difficult budget.

Based upon input from many residents, as well as of some of our councilors, in particular some of the new councilors, to ensure that we have a full understanding of the budget, how numbers were reached, and what makes sense, we requested some additional information be brought before the council.

That will be made available to the community to understand what is necessary to make a fully informed decision about the budget.

The process starts with the town departments preparing their budgets. Those are reviewed by the town manager. Under our charter, the town manager then presents his proposed budget to the council. This is the first step.

We have made some modifications to the process that was followed for many years prior to the change made last year. This year there is somewhat of a hybrid process.

We as a council are holding budget workshops so that the department heads can come before us to provide more information and answer questions regarding their proposals, both their proposed budget as well as their proposals for capital improvements to be considered under the capital improvement plan.

By the time this newspaper arrives in your homes, we will be nearing the end of the budget process. The council must vote on the budget by the third Monday of May.

We welcome your input, questions and comments. Perhaps you can share them with me at our next coffee gathering.

The next Coffee with the Mayor will be hosted by the Friends of the Library at the Cora J. Belden Library from 3-5 p.m. April 29. This is also a movie day at the library, so the coffee event will follow the film. I hope to see you there. **RHL**

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Super snacks

Healthy, fun treats your kids will love

by Mara Dresner
Staff Writer

Every parent knows the plaintive cry of "I'm hungry; what's there to eat?" Whether it's afterschool or for a summer playdate, snacks can be an important nutrition boost, or even a fun project.

"Snacks are considered mini-meals and help children focus at school, on homework and provide them with energy, vitamins and minerals to grow along with satisfying their hunger monster. Snacks are a great way for kids to enjoy fruits, vegetables, yogurt and other foods they may not be getting at their regular meals. Make sure to offer snacks that contain both protein and fiber such as a clementine and a cheese stick. Snacks help children refuel between meals and satisfy their appetites," noted Beth Chatfield, clinical dietitian with Connecticut Children's Medical Center, who also works with the CCMC Specialty Care Center in Farmington.

"As a professionally trained chef, one of my greatest joys is being in the kitchen and experimenting with new recipes. Over the past several months, I have been focusing most of my experimentation on recipes that appeal to kids," said Rita Neal, a mother of two.

She helped a group of parents organize Growing Great Schools, with a mission to promote childrens' and family wellness

"One of the ways Growing Great Schools does this is by offering getCOOKing, a program that teaches kids and teens how to cook. In addition, getCOOKing focuses on where food actually comes from, why it's important to eat local, seasonal foods and food traditions," Neal said.

In addition to creating recipes, Neal also likes to keep easy-to-grab foods for snacks, including apple slices, red pepper slices, carrot sticks, celery sticks, sliced cheddar cheese, clementines, frozen edamame in pods, nuts, bananas and other fruit.

"Strawberries and mangos are always a hit. Variety is key. Tastes change due to the season, mood swings and other unseen forces. The above list is what I think of as 'fast food," she said.

Of course, having healthy foods on hand and getting kids to eat them are two different things, even when you're an accomplished chef. Executive Chef Jeffrey Gordon of Stew Leonard's in Newington, said that when his kids were in elementary and middle schools, he would go into their classrooms and make fun dishes.

"Meanwhile, they won't eat anything unless it's brown," he said of his kids who are now 17 and 20. "With my son, if it's not pizza or pasta or some type of brown substance, it's still really tough and I'm trained at what I do."

Trying to get extra nutrition such as protein and iron into his daughter's diet has been another challenge. She is an athlete and also has low iron levels.

"She loves smoothies, and basically I've been able to switch the ingredients around, where she doesn't know they're in there. I'm looking for how do I get the vitamins and minerals and things they need to make them healthy, to help with their brain growth and their endurance."

Gordon said that younger children are often interested in the cooking process and want to be involved, such as decorating gingerbread men.

"A kid, especially in elementary school, loves to be interactive with whatever you're making. I think kids want to be part of the mix," he said.

LIFE spoke to several chefs in the area to get some of their favorite, original recipes for making snacks for kids. And if you're thinking ahead to summer, another session of getCOOKing at the Mandell JCC in West Hartford will be held the week of August 18. The program is sponsored by Growing Great Schools, based in West Hartford. For information visit growinggreatschools.org.

Chatfield has developed the following recipes. For more ideas, she recommends checking out snacks from the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics online.

Tortilla Pizzas

Ingredients:

small whole wheat tortillas
salsa
Shredded cheddar cheese
optional toppings (beans, cilantro, chopped green peppers, chopped black olives)

Directions:

Place tortilla on foil-lined tray and mound the salsa and cheese on each tortilla. Cook in oven or toaster oven until cheese is melted and edges of tortilla are browned. Add a dollop of sour cream or guacamole if desired.

Multi-Layer Parfait in a Cup

Ingredients:

seedless grapes, quartered
plain nonfat Greek yogurt
diced pears or any other fruit (strawberries, blueberries, mandarin oranges)
granola
roasted pumpkin seeds
2 teaspoons maple syrup

Directions:

Layer all ingredients, dividing equally in mini containers

Executive Chef Jeffrey Gordon of Stew Leonard's in Newington has developed the following recipes, testing them on his toughest customers – his own kids.

Chef Jeff's Power Punch Smoothie

Ingredients:

1/3 cup almond milk
6-8 strawberries, stems removed
1 whole banana
1 tbsp. blackstrap molasses
1 tbsp. agave nectar or honey
½ cup crushed ice

Directions:

Add all ingredients into blender and blend until smooth. Makes one serving. **RHL**

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586 New London Tnpk
(At Rt. 17 Overpass)

Popular playtime picks

Today's hottest games to entertain kids this summer

Compiled by Alison Jalbert

Zombie Run!

"The cards all have zombie kind of things on them. Zombies are popular and it's an easy-to-learn game. That's part of the draw; when people come in looking for games, as an adult, they want to have fun playing the game, too."
–Sara Scott, owner of The Perfect Toy in Avon

IQ Bit

"It's a one-player game with 120 different ways to play it. It starts out really easy, but with 120 different ways to play, it gets harder as you go on. We have a demo of it up on the counter [and people] really get into it. That's always an indication that it's a good game."
–Dave Ekwall, owner of The Wooden Toy in Wethersfield

Wet Head

"It's a new game – you wear a helmet filled with water and pull out a stick with the possibility of getting the whole helmet of water [on you]."
–Kim Reed, owner of Pinwheels Toys & Games in Glastonbury

Spot It!

"The cards have a variety of pictures on them, with one matching picture on every card. You want to be the first one to spot the match. Younger children do really well [with this game]. As an adult … we don't see it as quickly. It's challenging for adults – fun, but we don't tend to win."
–Deb Necker, owner of Necker's Toyland in Simsbury

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Help your child love *music* and *dance*

Classes offer lifelong benefits

by Mara Dresner
Staff Writer

It may be fun to imagine your child as the next Joshua Bell or Misty Copeland when you sign up for music or dance lessons. Your child may have visions of being a star, basking in the spotlight surrounded by legions of adoring fans.

While many develop a lifelong love of music and dance, some children quickly decide that the lessons aren't for them. What's a parent to do when a child starts saying "I don't want to go" when it's time for the weekly lesson?

The first aspect to consider is whether your child is indeed old enough for the activity. Todd Zurman, owner of Vortex Guitar Studio in Wethersfield, said that's more of a factor than many parents realize.

"I think in a perfect world after 8 [years of age] is a great time to start playing. Older students, they know what they want to play when they come in. They know their musical style," he said. "If they can't spell guitar, they probably shouldn't be taking it."

However, Zurman noted that it's not a hard and fast rule.

"I had one 5-year-old who liked listening to the Beatles, who liked listening to Led Zeppelin. He had great taste in music. That kid was a breeze to teach. I have 8-year-olds who don't listen to music; their parents don't like to listen to music," he said.

There's also a practical consideration with certain instruments, such as the guitar. And that's simply the size of the instrument may be too much for your child to handle.

"At 6 years old the smaller guitars can be harder to play," he said.

Other instruments might be more appropriate for younger students, such as piano.

"I think 5 seems to be the age that makes sense for starting off. I've had 4-year-olds and they can't sit still and they're not really ready," said Mike Montgomery of Newington Music, who teaches piano, drums, guitar and bass. "I have a lot of piano students. At that age it's a good instrument. There isn't a physical requirement on your

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fingers like guitar. Piano is great for 5-year-olds."

Don't worry that your child is too old to start. Despite the influence of his guitar-playing father, Zurman didn't start to play until he was in seventh grade. Previously, he played drums.

He said to give the lessons time.

"If they've been wanting to play and they come to the first lesson and think they don't like teacher, take a month of lessons. It takes time to get used to each other," he recommended.

If your child still isn't into it, it may just be that the child is not ready.

Or, perhaps the child wants to play something else.

"If they want to play drums, let them try being a drummer. If they want to play guitar, let them try being a guitar player. They should have freedom of choice to try different things," he said.

Managing your child's expectations is also important.

Kids sometimes quit because "it's harder than they thought," Zurman said. "Years ago when Guitar Hero came out, kids were taking guitar because of the game. Then they find out they can't just play like Jimi Hendrix. They didn't know they'd have to practice."

Gregory Colossale, founder of BackBeat City in Glastonbury, agreed.

"It appears recently that it's instant gratification that they receive from other means. That isn't something that comes quickly from piano. I find that a constant issue. [Students are] a little more impatient," said Colossale who teaches piano, voice, show choir and acting. "They're not understanding that it's the practicing, the time spent outside of the lesson, is when they get better. It's not in the 30 or 40 minutes we spend together once a week."

He suggested working practice into what a child already is doing.

"[A child] is probably watching an hour of television a day, and there's probably 22 minutes of commercials. If they practice during the commercials, that's a really smart way to practice. It's blended inside of their life. You play into their world and show them how the piano can fit in."

While technology can be a hindrance – Zurman doesn't even have a computer in his office – there are ways that it can be helpful.

Colossale said that students can record themselves playing.

"They're able to hear how simple they once sounded and how they grow," he said.

Colossale suggested that parents can help their child by making sure the piano is accessible, without books, plants or clutter blocking it.

"I think the best thing for a parent to do is encourage their young person to go up to the piano without prompting. Whether they improvise or make some noise or practice, encourage that and allow that to happen as much as possible," he said.

"Try not to complain about the noise," he added. "I was fortunate as a young person, I just banged on the piano and taught myself. Then it became an interest. I think it's about accessibility and your attitude toward it."

"Dance particularly taught me discipline and gave me a love and appreciation for the arts. ... Kids need an outlet, a place to let go and be themselves. It takes time to find that, and it forces them to work hard. But it's worth it, for them and the parents."

– Diana Evjen

Gauging the love

While students are a little older when they begin music lessons, dance classes often start much earlier.

Shannon Barry, co-owner, Shamrock School of Irish Dance, which has satellite locations in West Hartford and Simsbury, started dancing when she was 4.

She said that children have varied reasons for not wanting to come to lessons – and sometimes, it's a lot more basic than parents realize.

"Through the years I have found that the reason for young children between the ages of 4 and 7 would be that they simply don't want to leave the house. This might come as a surprise. However, when I have asked parents why, the answer is, 'When trying to leave the house to go to dance class, their child simply says I don't want to go.' I then have said to the parent that their child is doing well in class, pays attention, and understands and follows directions and movements, and really seem to enjoy it while in class. Unfortunately, it seems, possibly, parents might be a bit too willing to say OK when the child doesn't want to go because, as parents, we are all so busy with work, housekeeping and other activities that it becomes easier for the parent to just say OK to their child and not go to class rather than telling their child, 'It is time for dance class and we need to keep the commitment we made and finish the year,'" said Barry, who is certified through An Coimisiun le Rinci Gaelacha.

She said it's important to communicate with the instructor when a young child doesn't want to go to class.

"Ask to speak to the teacher and see if they are participating in class. Also, if your dance school allows you to watch a class from time to time, you should be able to tell how your

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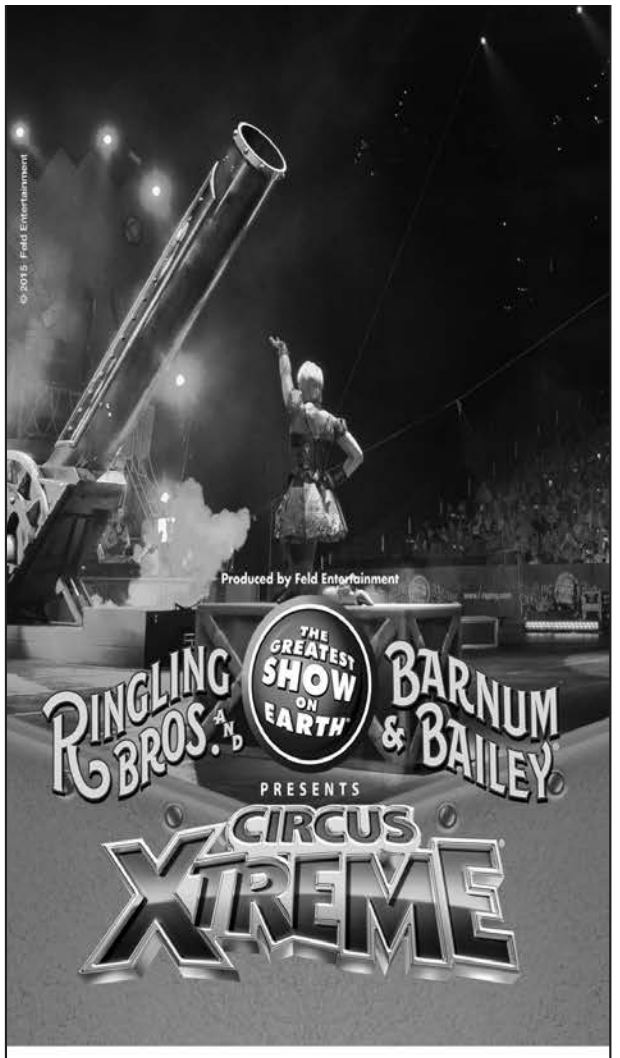

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child is doing that way," she said. "You definitely will know if your child enjoys what they are doing if they are dancing around your house practicing [what] they are working on in dance class."

It's a different situation for kids in middle or high school.

"The main reason usually is they have joined an after-school sport or have a lot of homework," Barry said.

Diana Evjen of Evjen Academy of Performing Arts in Farmington said that while scheduling is an issue, it can also help define where a child's interests are.

"The biggest reason for kids dropping their sports or extracurricular activities is overscheduling. And that isn't a bad thing. We have so many opportunities for children these days and they have the ability to find activities that suit them. We put them in dance and soccer and Girl Scouts or choir, and through the process of elimination, children are able to choose their best fit," Evjen said. "Parents should recognize that children are in the learning process, just the beginning, of their journey into finding their strong suits. With my own kids, I try to gauge their 'love' for the sport or activity."

She doesn't evaluate this by their willingness to practice, rather by their attitudes during and after the activity.

"As a mom in this generation, where a whole world is available for kids through iPads and cell phones and Xbox, etc., I feel like kids need to do something, anything, in a group or as part of a team, where they train [or] practice together and learn how to work as a team player," she said. "Dance particularly taught me discipline and gave me a love and appreciation for the arts. Everyone is different, but dance was and still is my outlet and I needed that when I was growing up. Kids need an outlet, a place to let go and be themselves. It takes time to find that, and it forces them to work hard. But it's worth it, for them and the parents."

"If they want to play drums, let them try being a drummer. If they want to play guitar, let them try being a guitar player. They should have freedom of choice to try different things."

– Mike Montgomery

Barry noted that the parents' attitude can make a difference.

"The parent's job is to give encouragement and to do the best they can. Make sure you are available to watch them practice when asked. Be excited for them if they have had a hard time with a new move or routine and now have mastered it," she recommended.

Barry said there are numerous benefits to taking classes.

"Dance or music is a great outlet for children to relieve stress. It builds confidence, great self-esteem and dance, of course, helps with physical fitness," she said, adding that dance and music can also help with math and public speaking.

Montgomery actually builds math into his lessons, such as talking about how many quarter notes fit in a measure. He also noted that music lessons can help children find their place in the world.

"It gives them something to be good at. It happened to me. I was good at music when I was younger; there were other kids like me in band. I remember really liking it and I was good at it, and I could fit in. I wasn't the sports kid. When I was in gym, I'm the last kid to get picked," he remembered. "If a kid likes music, it's a good thing to try. You can really see them light up." RHL

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Safety first

Parents need to closely monitor children and modern technology

by Mark Jahne
LIFE Staff

The world of technology is rapidly changing, and those most adept at using it are often children and teenagers. But experts say young people tend not to understand the risks awaiting them in cyberspace or the need to use this technology wisely.

Cell phones, especially smart phones with Internet access, are in the hands of countless young people. They are the masters of text messaging, Facebook, Instagram and all the other forms of social media.

"The kids are the 'technados' and we adults are the immigrants. It is much more intuitive for our children," said Emily Daigle, director of special services for the Wethersfield Public Schools.

Educators and law enforcement worry that the innocence of youth, when mixed with advanced technology, is a recipe for disaster. This is separate from the technology used in schools that, in some districts, can be taken home.

"Technology has moved faster than our ability to educate on the ethics and safe use of it. We see that not only with our kids, but with adults. Technology etiquette, I would call it," Daigle said.

"We're always trying to multitask. It just never ends. I think we need boundaries. We need to respect face-to-face time," she added.

American society has become one of immediate gratification, she said, so people are constantly checking their phones and texting, even while driving.

Daigle said few children, including the older ones, seem to understand that whatever they send into cyberspace is there forever and can come back to haunt them. In her opinion, parents have the ultimate responsibility to decide if and when to allow children to have a cell phone, personal email account, Facebook page and other social media.

She emphasized that parents always need to know what their children are doing with the technology they are allowed to have and must stand up to complaints that this is something personal and private. Peer pressure

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LIFE with kids

among youth is not an excuse for a parent to back down.

One idea she suggested is to place tracking devices on phones that will identify where a child is at all times. She firmly believes that cell phone and other technology use should not be allowed to proceed without strict monitoring until that son or daughter heads off to college.

"Parents need to understand that kids are vulnerable. They don't have the knowledge to make safe decisions," Daigle said. "Make the decision that is right for your house."

Parents especially need to be aware of how their children are using social media. Cyber bullying is a rapidly growing problem.

"That has changed so profoundly for these kids," she said.

In the old days, bullying was limited to the bully, the victim and perhaps a couple of other children who witnessed the cruel behavior in school or on the playground.

The victim could get away from it by going home.

Now bullying and other harmful remarks are posted online where they can be seen by thousands and those comments never go away. Daigle called cyber bullying pervasive in school districts around the country.

In a few instances, victims have committed suicide.

She said the Wethersfield district works hard to educate students about this problem and how to respect and treat one another. Daigle urges parents in every town to work in partnership with the schools on these issues.

Whenever an allegation of bullying is brought to school administrators in her district, the school resource officer is informed and Facebook and Twitter accounts are reviewed as part of the investigation.

Any student identified as a bully must go through a remediation process to learn why such behavior is unacceptable.

"What they say is out there and it's now permanent. It's a lot easier to say something cruel when it's not face to face," Daigle said.

She warned parents that children will do their best to get around any blocks or boundaries placed on their use of technology and the Internet.

She compared granting a child free access to cyberspace to handing over the keys to the family car without first requiring some driving lessons.

Website domains, Twitter handles, Facebook pages, email accounts, even ring tones can all create problems. Something posted by a 14-year-old today can come back to haunt that person when it comes time to apply for college or a job.

"I'm not a big fan of kids having phones with the Internet on them," said Jamie DeSimone, community services officer for the

Newington Police Department.

She said there is no reason why parents cannot give their child a flip phone or track phone to enable them to stay in touch without access to cyberspace. She agreed with Daigle that smart phones and other modern technology are not a young person's right, especially since the parents pay for this technology.

Safety is paramount.

"Kids are curious and they are too trusting. These kids put out too much information," DeSimone said. "I'm not a big fan of kids having Facebook or Twitter or Instagram. That's a pedophile's dream."

She said pedophiles often pretend to be older children. They identify vulnerabilities and then groom their eventual victims.

"They can get you on your phone, they can get you on your computer, they can get you on whatever gaming system you use," she said.

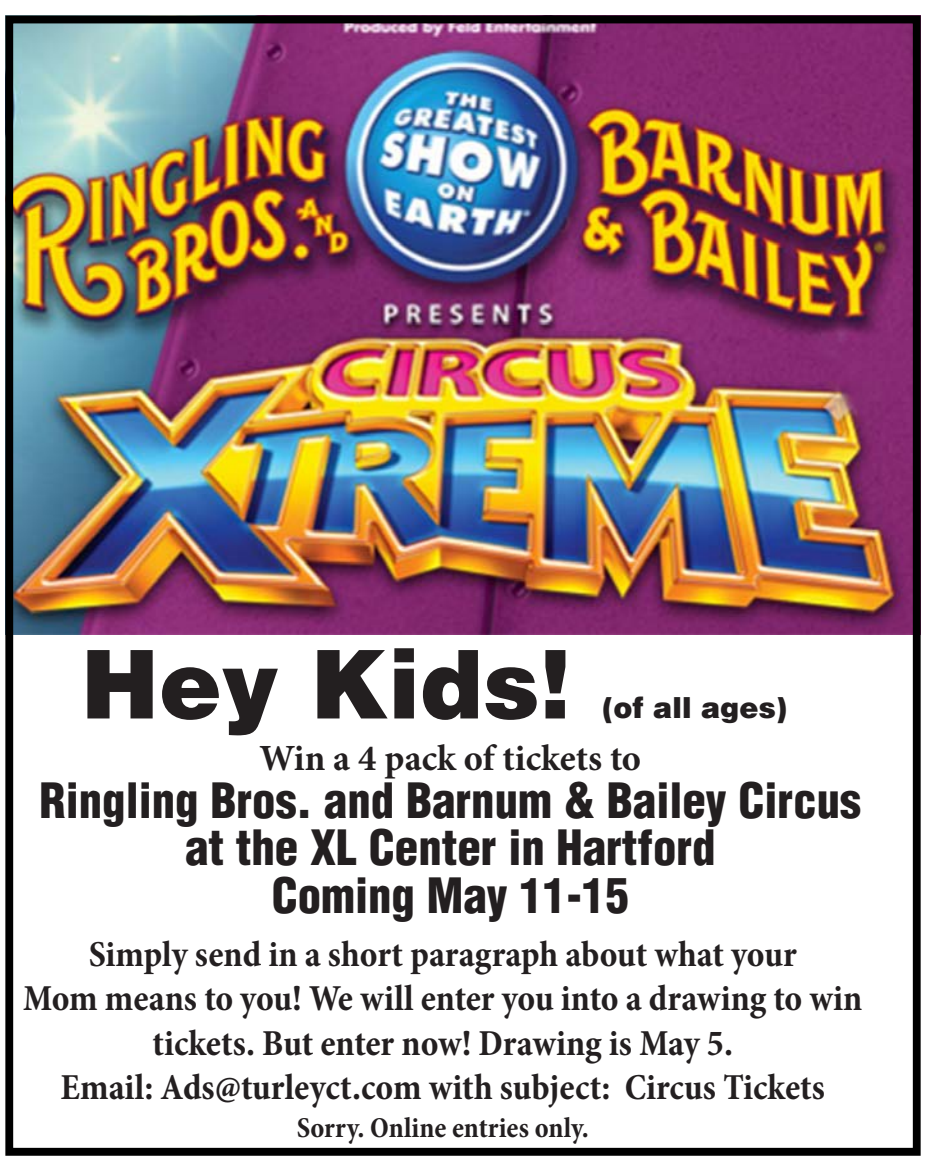
The officer spoke of teenage girls posting inappropriate photos of themselves online that can cause great damage to them later in their lives.

"Colleges and places of employment do Internet searches," she said.

When they find this kind of material, it does not bode well for the applicant, even if it was posted in a moment of immaturity many years ago.She teaches Internet safety in the schools and spoke of one particular incident that resulted in a violent crime.

"We had a Myspace case that turned into a sexual assault," DeSimone said. "It's a scary world." **RHL**

"Kids are curious and they are too trusting. These kids put out too much information."
–Jamie DeSimone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News roundup

Stop distracted driving

The Rocky Hill Police Department partnered with the Connecticut Highway Safety Office as part of National Distracted Driving Awareness Month. The aim was to crack down on drivers who choose to ignore Connecticut's mobile phone laws. This joint effort spanned the month of April.

In 2014, an estimated 3,179 people were killed (10 percent of all crash fatalities) and an additional 431,000 were injured (18 percent of all crash injuries) in crashes involving distracted drivers. This past year, law enforcement wrote more than 22,000 citations as part of an effort to get drivers to put down their cell phones and pay attention to the road.

Local police held several distracted driving enforcement checkpoints during the course of the month. The fines are $150 for a first offense, $300 for a second offense and $500 for all subsequent offenses.

Police seek driver

Police are looking for the driver of a car that struck and killed a pedestrian at 12:20 p.m. April 6 in front of the Stop & Shop supermarket in Town Line Plaza. The victim was identified as Sandra Scully, 55, of Meriden.

This incident remains an active investigation currently being handled by the Mid-State Traffic Investigation Team. Anyone with information is asked to contact Rocky Hill Police Det. Peter Vanturas at 860-258-7640.

They're Terrier tough

1 Rocky Hill High School sponsored its annual Terrier Tough obstacle course and race April 2 at Elm Ridge Park to raise money to help defray the cost of the annual NOLA trip. A group of RHHS students and faculty members spend their April vacation in New Orleans helping to build houses in areas devastated by Hurricane Katrina.

First place winners in the male student division are, from left, Trevor Faber, Jimmy Presutti, Mitchell Aureli and Kyle Faber. It rained the day of Terrier Tough, which is why the boys are covered with mud.

Become a mentor

The Rocky Hill Chamber of Commerce is looking for people willing to mentor students at Rocky Hill High School. The commitment is one hour per week.

Mentors meet with their selected teenager during school hours. They talk with the students, play games with them and help them build for the future.

Mentors are required to submit to a police background check and participate in some training. Anyone interested in this program is encouraged to visit the chamber website at rhchamber.org.

Free comic books await

Free Comic Book Day occurs on the first Saturday in May each year, when participating comic book shops across North America and around the world give away free comic books to anyone who comes into their stores. These are special issues created by the various comic companies specifically for this day.

Heroes & Hitters, a family run comic book store at 1845 Silas Deane Highway, has actively participated in this day since its inception 15 years ago. The owners are the husband-wife team of Wayne Horgan and Eileen Albrizio and they will be giving books away May 7.

Listen to the music

The Old Church Concert Series was designed as a showcase for Connecticut based singer/songwriters to expand their audience and introduce people to the wealth of original music that is created in Connecticut. The series started with a March 18 concert featuring Rocky Hill's own Andy Wakeman.

The Rocky Hill United Methodist Church is the setting for these acoustic shows. Two more concerts are scheduled for April 29 and May 20.

The April 29 show features three female singer/songwriters: Gracie Day from Bristol, Meredith Rose from Storrs and Canyon from Westport, the 2015 Connecticut Music Award winner for song of the year.

The May 20 show will have only two acts, Heather Fay and the Meadows Brothers. Both are Connecticut Music Award and New England Music Award winners from 2015.

There is a suggested donation of $5 at the door. Concerts begin at 7 p.m. and the church is located at 623 Old Main St. For more information see oldchurchconcerts.com.

Health district stresses bicycle safety

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 1.7 million Americans develop a traumatic

brain injury every year. Many of these injuries can be prevented with the use of properly-fitted helmets.

The Central Connecticut Health District sells bicycle helmets year-round that come in a variety of colors for children and adults, ranging from toddler sizes to adult XL. The cost is $10. They are available for purchase at the Central Connecticut Health District headquarters in Wethersfield town hall. For further information call 860-721-2822.

Student fights cancer

2 Savannah Pearson, a Rocky Hill resident and high school senior at Hartford Magnet School's Sports and Medical Sciences Academy, is focusing her senior project on developing different fundraisers to benefit the American Cancer Society's Making Strides Against Breast Cancer of Hartford.

Team Glittersquad allows her to honor the memory of her grandmother, who lost her battle with breast cancer in 2014. Savannah is shown with her mother Margaret at last year's walk. **RHL**

Thank you to the 5,300 volunteers who helped change lives for children and families in our community last year.

Clockwise from top left: Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA), 24th annual United Way *Year of Caring*, United Way Volunteer Budget Coaching, and, United Way Readers Program.

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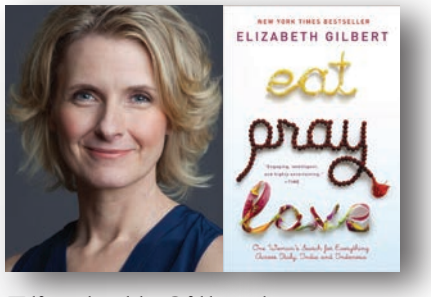

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People notes

Rubeena Abraham, Evanna Burgwardt, Elizabeth Cicia, Crystal Flores, Ryan Holden, Shona Korr, Zachary Leveton, Geycel Muniz and **Darci Abate** were named to the president's list at Goodwin College.

Skylar Barron, Robert Downes, Jordan Korn, Karishma Lawrence, Hannah Rowland, Jacob Rowland, Mark Sheehan and **Zachary Swilling** were named to the first-semester honor roll at Kingswood Oxford School.

Clinton Palmeri, Jeremy Prema, Andi Duro, Neil Patel, Tej Patel, Brooke Dunnery and **Brianna Hollister** earned high honors for the third marking period from the University High School of Science and Engineering. **Aakash Balaji, Dominick Hollister** and **Saranya Tadikonda** earned honors.

Brooklyn Bradley, Kellyanne Cahill, Eugenia Cho, Jessica Grodovich, Martha Johnson, Lan Lou, Alyssa Scandura and **Madison Swilling** were named to high honors at Mercy High School. **Julia Bouchard, Madison Bradley, Alina Hafeez, Laura Outeiro, Morgan Parrotta, Julia Elise Villanueva, Julia Wenceslao** and **Shenyang "Samantha" Zhang** earned first honors. **Amanda LaRoe** achieved second honors.

Jennifer Carlson performed in the inaugural concert at the new Fine Arts Building at Eastern Connecticut State University.

Lindsey Blustein, Jenna Marzilli and **Lillian Mckenzie** were named to the president's list at Clemson University.

Kylie Federici and **Kate Gibson** were named to the dean's list at Emerson College.

Sydney Greenspan was initiated into the honor society of Phi Kappa Phi, the nation's oldest and most selective collegiate honor society for all academic disciplines. Greenspan is pursuing a degree in occupational therapy at Ithaca College. RHL

Editorial

Enough with the texting while driving

It simply boggles the mind. Why do people think they can take their eyes off the road while operating a car or truck without dramatically increasing the risk that they could cause a crash?

Common sense would suggest that anyone over the age of 5 would know better than to do that. Yet drivers all over the country are crashing every day because they consider text messaging more important than operating their vehicles in a safe manner.

We live in a society that celebrates and often demands instant gratification and, for the first time in human history, we have technology that allows us to satisfy that craving. We just can't wait to respond to that phone call or text message.

In recent weeks, there has been at least one fatal accident in Greater Hartford in which someone who was allegedly texting while driving struck and killed a pedestrian. Another alleged text messenger struck and injured a police officer working on a roadside construction job.

We shouldn't need to create a multi-million dollar campaign to educate motorists about the dangers of distracted driving, especially texting. Studies have shown that looking away from the road for just a few seconds is the equivalent of driving the length of a football field at 55 miles per hour while blindfolded.

Nobody in their right mind would do that.

Texting is in some ways even more dangerous than drunken driving because the person manipulating the cell phone is looking at the phone, not the road. One can only imagine the level of threat created by someone who is texting and intoxicated.

"I only took my eyes off the road for a second," is the common plea to police.

There is no voice or text message that is so important that it cannot wait a few minutes. But if one thinks it is, then pull off the road for a moment to send a reply.

Police departments all over this area conduct occasional distracted driving enforcement patrols. Motorists drive right past uniformed cops with their phones in their hands and then act surprised when they are stopped.

The tickets are not cheap: $150 for a first offense, $300 for a second offense and $500 for all additional offenses. But that's not making enough of a difference.

Maybe the legislature should pass a law allowing police to confiscate cell phones for 24 hours when they catch someone using them illegally while driving. Perhaps the inconvenience will prove a better deterrent than the fines.

It's time we all learned to resist the craving for instant gratification and refrain from text messaging while driving. It's too late to say "I'm sorry" after someone has been killed or maimed. **RHL**

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BY MARK DIXON
WFSB METEOROLOGIST [AMS]

Celebrate May...

The 5th month of the year is one featuring lots of events. Here's a look at historical weather related statistics for some of them.

Cinco de Mayo – average low: 45, high: 68; record low: 30 (2005), high: 93 (1949).

Mother's Day, the 8th this year – average low: 45, high: 69; record low: 31 (1968), high: 92 (2000). Just a day later, the 9th, marks the latest recorded snow of 1.3" at Windsor Locks, where the official records are kept.

Memorial Day, falling on the 30th – average low: 52, high: 75; record low: 37 (1961), high: 93 (1987).

The hottest temperature recorded in this month was 99 degrees, that happened twice (on the 20th in 1996 and then again on the 26th in 2010).

Averages are calculated over a three-decade timespan, 1981-2010. Records have been kept for the Greater Hartford Area for over 110 years, dating back to 1905.

Some notable astronomical events happening this month:

On the 21st, the Full Flower Moon – marking fertility with the warmer temperatures, named for the abundance of flowers coming into full bloom. Concerned about when to plant? The average last frost happens early in the month, so plan for around the 2nd week or later.

Then on the 23rd, Mars will be its brightest in over a decade. **RHL**

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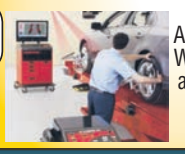

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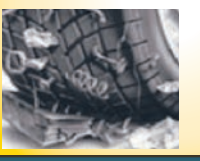

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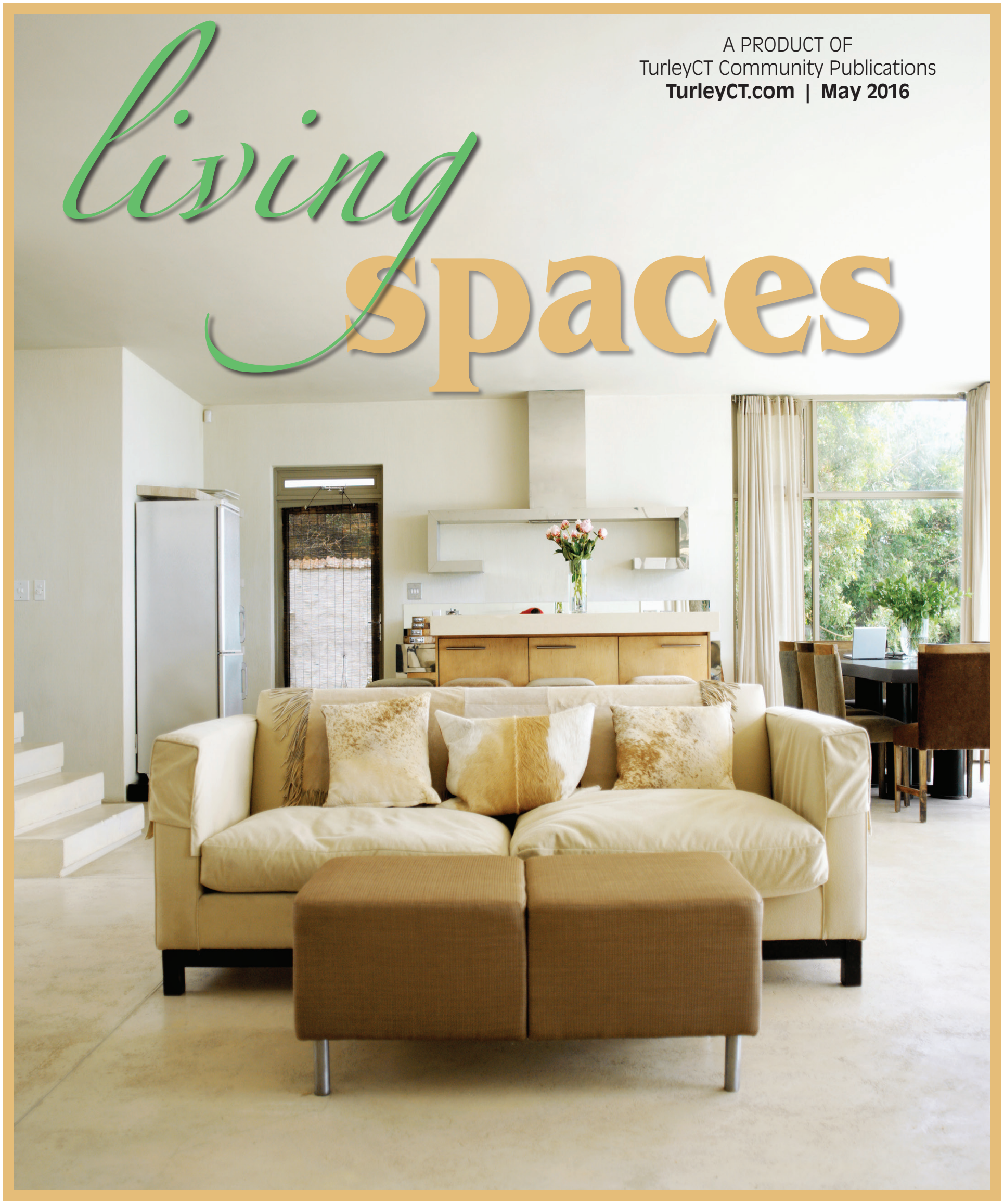

Cooking up kitchen makeovers

See what you can do with $500 and a weekend

by Lynn Woike
Editor

Whether your home is large or small, the kitchen is bound to be the busiest room in the house and will generally show the signs of use more quickly.

We turned to Peter Lemos of DreamMaker Bath and Kitchen in Newington for some suggestions on how to spruce it up – all for less than $500, a few basic skills and a weekend or less of your time.

"The trick is to take your time and avoid using creative shortcuts to finish quickly," he said.

Cabinets typically take up the most space in a kitchen, and their finish becomes worn over time.

"A good paint job can add years of life to them," Lemos said, adding, "Invest in good paint ... either oil-based or latex paint. Latex is easier to apply and clean up, but many argue that oil will give you a sturdier finish and is worth the extra effort. Choose an eggshell or semi-gloss finish. Flat paint will look too dull and high gloss paint will emphasize any imperfections.

He recommends removing the doors and drawer fronts, cleaning all surfaces with a strong cleaner such as TSP, lightly sanding every surface to be painted, then using a tack cloth to remove any dust.

Whether you paint the cabinets or not, new pulls are a quick and inexpensive upgrade.

Knobs are easiest to replace since there is only one hole; replacing handles requires a bit more effort.

"Try to size your new handles as closely as you can to existing handles in order to minimize the need to fill old holes. If you do need to, you can use wood putty stained or painted to match the cabinet finish and make the holes virtually disappear.

"The big trick with handles is to make sure they are precisely vertical or horizontal with the edges of the cabinet door. To help you accomplish this, you should pick up a handy template or jig available wherever knobs are sold. This will help you align your holes correctly."

Noting that most kitchens are poorly lit, Lemos said, "You can add loads of style and function for very little investment with a few strategically placed lights to illuminate work areas or dining spaces, or to just add to the general brightness of the kitchen. A new set of track lights, pendant lights or undercabinet lights can be a huge but simple addition to any kitchen."

Choose fixtures that match your décor, he said, noting that an ornate traditional chandelier over a sleek, contemporary island will not look right. Pay special attention to high-use areas like countertops or islands; bright, directed lighting in these locations can minimize accidents.

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LED light bulbs use 95 percent less electricity than do incandescent bulbs. While they cost more upfront, they last longer and emit far less heat than other bulbs.

Another way to update the kitchen is to install a new tile backsplash.

"For a few dollars per square foot and an afternoon of work, you can turn that dull space between your counters and upper cabinets into a virtuosic display of artistry," Lemos said.

"Gorgeous tiles in every color and texture imaginable are easily available and can be installed by most amateurs. You can find a good selection along with materials like adhesive and grout at your local home center. You will need to buy both field tiles and border tiles."

Lemos advises ordering at least 20 percent more than the square footage being covered to allow for fitting and waste. For a professional look, rent a wet saw to cut the tiles.

If you invest in these projects, "the payoff in style, function and economy will be priceless," Lemos said. **RHL**

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Advice, thoughts and help for do-it-yourselfers

Businesses offer classes and blogs for great design at home

by Alicia B. Smith
Staff Writer

Local experts share their decorating know-how through blogs and hands-on workshops. Here is what a few had to say as to how they inspire those wanting to try their hand at decorating themselves.

Vivid Hue Home

Walking into Vivid Hue Home is like walking into a kaleidoscope of color, an abundance of decorative home goods in blues, pinks, greens and yellows.

At one time there was no brick or mortar place to shop, or acutal store to shop in, rather owner Heather Grahling sat at her computer writing a blog about decorating trends.

"Over time readers expressed interest in the projects I was doing in my own home so many of my posts became more personal," Grahling said. "I love pushing the boundaries with colors and patterns and I think that my followers love to see how far I will go."

Some of those design ideas include wall-papering ceilings in her own home.

"I have always been passionate about decorating and the blog was a terrific outlet in which to become a part of that world," Grahling said.

In 2015 Grahling opened her shop in Farmington, bringing her ideas and the trends she wrote about out of the blogoshere and into living rooms.

Grahling did not give up her blog, however, as it continues to be a part of her shop's website.

"With the brick and mortar shop now open, I often use the blog as a way to convey the fun items that we are currently carrying in the shop," she said, adding that she also continues to write about do-it-yourself projects, showcasing local artists and designers and anything else that she feels "will be interesting to my readers and customers."

Through her blog Grahling recently shared a personal story about her daughter's health and about her trip to the New York Now 2016 show, a post that included plenty of photos.

It is not just her blog that interests about 15,000 would-be decorators; shehas 11,000 followers on Facebook and 5,500 on Instagram.

"I utilize all aspects of social media to reach my readers," she said. "For example, even though I don't have an ecommerce website, I post most of the products from my shop on Instagram and Facebook. It gives my followers an idea of what we currently have and I have even started shipping to all over the U.S. just based upon what viewers want from my Instagram feed."

Additionally, readers of her blog have asked her questions, and she has come to realize how deep this interaction can be for her followers.

"The blog makes a personal connection with the followers," Grahling said.

Vivid Hue Home is located at 775 Farmington Ave., or find the shop and Grahling's blog at vividhuehome.com. Or follower her on Instagram, Facebook, Twitter and Pinterest.

In The House & Through The Garden

There is no reason to feel intimidated when taking a class at Simsbury's In The House & Through The Garden. They offer several classes and will walk a hopeful do-it-yourselfer through each and every step.

Thomas Mach opened his shop in the summer of 2015 and right away, customers were intrigued with the Annie Sloan chalk painted items he had for sale. So much so that he stocks this special project paint and offers classes weekly.

The most popular class is "Annie Sloan 101" in which Mach said, "you learn all of Annie's different painting techniques and how to do modern or the rusty, chippy looks, two-color distressing," he said. The class also allows participants to learn how to mix colors.

"It's really the fundamental class, it's really hands-on," Mach said.

Participants paint their own

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board in order to get a feel for the paint and the finish they like. There is also an assortment of beer, wine, coffee, tea and appetizers to enjoy.

For those who do not already know, Annie Sloan is a British artist who developed her own paint specifically for refinishing furniture. The product is nontoxic, no ordor and dries very quickly. The artist calls it chalk paint, even though there is no chalk in the product, but it does have a velvety finish. The paint is great for newbies because it does not require preparing a piece of furniture ahead of time and there is no priming or stripping necessary.

"Its not normal paint," Mach said. "It's not at all what you are used to using."

For those looking to move beyond the fundamentals, the shop's offerings continue with "I'm Having a Bad Chair Day," for those interested in painting fabric, which the Annie Sloan paint can also be used. There are workshops for mirrors or picture frames for those who want to update something they already own.

Mach said too that he also does what he refers to as "Girls Night Out Evenings," in which a group of friends will come in to learn, sometimes for a bachelorette party or just to have fun with friends.

Other classes are for specific furniture refinishing projects, such as when participants bring in a coffee table or side table they own or found in a second hand shop and want to update it.

"It's all about the workshops," Mach said.

The shop has 17 such events planned between April and June. Look for more information on its website www.inthehouseandthroughthegarden.com, or visit it at 10 Jim Gallaher Way, Simsbury.

Cindarella's Attic

Cinda Fiamma of Cindarella's Attic in Wethersfield has been refinishing furniture for more than 30 years.

"I love it, it relaxes you so much," she said.

That might be easy for her to say since she has decades of experience, but Fiamma insists that those who have never tried it can also find success.

She has been offering refinishing classes for three years at her shop at 59 Wells Road.

"When you leave my classes you will know the four basic steps and a technique," she said.

The steps include cleaning the piece of furniture to be refinished, painting it with one or two coats with a chalk mineral based paint, smoothing it down and the final step, putting on a topcoat to seal it.

Her Basic Class starts off small. Fiamma gets kitchen cabinet doors from a company in Minnesota that typically have a small flaw in them so the company will not sell them. She uses the doors to teach her refinishing techniques and participants leave with a freshly painted tray that they did.

Her other classes are the kind in which participants bring in their own piece of furniture, a class she typically restricts to two people. This enables them to work on the piece, leave for lunch to give the paint time to cure, and come back to finish it later in the day.

"They just love it," Fiamma said, sharing the story about one customer who came in never having painted anything in her life and she liked it so much she went home and refinished her entire bedroom set.

Fiamma said that for those who feel they might not have the artistic flair to try this, they too will like the finished piece. She will be there to walk them through each step.

For one thing, if it does not come out well, the American Paint Company paint she uses wipes off very easily.

"It's just a thing," she said. "You can't make a mistake."

These days more clients are preferring to finish their piece with a distressed look, although she can teach them how to make a piece look modern or rustic or any number of other styles.

She also offers the Chippy Class, a technique that when done allows you to see layers of paint.

"Whatever they want to know I have so many tricks I can show people, Fiamma said.

Cindarella's Attic is located at 59 Wells Rd., Wethersfield. For more information visit cinda-rellasattic.com or call 860-563-0351. **RHL**

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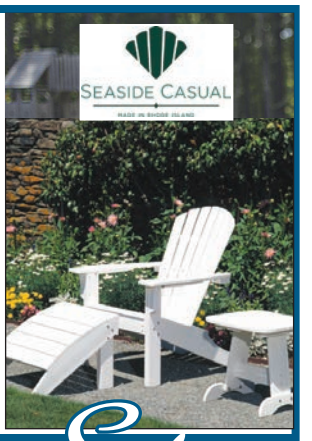

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Room to spare

Consider the possibilities if you have an extra room

by Sloan Brewster
LIFE Staff

Extra rooms in a home can be transformed into special spaces.

Thomas Mach, owner of In the House and Through the Garden in Simsbury, said he thought converting an empty bedroom into a craft room was a great idea.

"I know many people are doing that," he said.

A crafty space

Having done the same thing with a couple rooms in the store, Mach had some thoughts on how to perfect the space for its new use.

"Start with a paint job so it has a very different look," he said.

Big on environmental matters, Mach suggests going with an eco-friendly paint with a lot of pigment to add an exciting burst of color to the walls.

"Paints with a lot of pigment can give you depth of color," he said. "This is an opportunity to have fun in the room so you can have a splash of color."

Once the room has a fresh coat, the next step is adding storage, because, Mach said, whatever the craft project is, there needs to be plenty of storage.

A common way to achieve that is by using lots of plastic containers, but Mach suggested a more attractive idea, noting it would also be cheaper than buying plastic crates; drop by a thrift store and pick up a vintage sideboard or hutch and upscale it with a bright splash of paint. Some of his customers have gone to the Habitat for Humanity ReStore in Bloomfield for such pieces.

"You could get an old piece of furniture and paint it and go a lot cheaper than bins," he said.

Making sure the room has quality lighting is the next important step in transforming the space, Mach said.

Then get a nice table to sit down and get to work.

"What's trendy? Old farm tables have become very popular," he said, adding that it's time for more paint. "So again, you're repurposing."

Repurposing antiques is not only trendy, but easy, he said.

"Nothing harder than pick a color and paint, no sanding no prepping," Mach said. "You just pick a color and paint."

Finally, add a finishing touch to make sure the room breathes inspiration, Mach said. He suggests putting up a bulletin board and affixing to it pictures or fabric swatches or whatever speaks to the crafts to be done in the room.

"Put stuff in that room that inspires you, to always give you ideas for other projects. Almost like an idea board or an inspiration board."

Don't forget the important apps. Mach pointed out that Pinterest, Houzz and Instagram were critical to getting going.

"That will always give you fresh ideas and inspiration plus you can share all your crafts with other people," he said.

With that, the room is ready for creating crafts.

"You've got lighting, you've got the inspiration, you've got the surface, storage," Mach said. "And now you just need some free time to finish what you do."

A fitness space

Since 1998, Frank Bentkowski, director of sales at Ultimate Fitness in Avon, has turned spare rooms into workout rooms.

"The first thing is to look at who in the household will be using the gym [and] what kinds of activity they enjoy doing," he said.

An important step before bringing in equipment is installing the right kind of flooring for working out. Bentkowski recommends interlocking rubber tiles.

Then look at the logistics of the room and decide if you want a sound system, a television, or both.

"You always want to look at cardio," Bentkowski said of choosing equipment.

The cardio equipment is going to depend on a few different things. First, there's preference. Is the room for someone who likes to walk, bike, run or who does all the above? What is their skill set and do they need something that is easy on their ankles or will help them with balance?

"You can have the exact replica of the experience in the gym," but that equipment will be costly, Bentkowski said.

Once the desired elliptical, stationary bike or treadmill has been chosen, it's time to consider strengthening equipment.

"For strength, you have to look at how skilled the individual is," he said.

There are different pieces of equipment from multi-stations that enable to person to work on every body part to more specialized units.

"To accompany that I think it would be great to have a set of dumbbells," Bentkowski said.

Set them on a four-foot rack and get an adjustable bench to use them. Some people like a pull up station as well, but they're not for everybody.

Finally, there needs to be an area for doing core work with a trifold mat or a yoga mat, and possibly some kettle balls.

A fun and restful space

Linda Black of Linda P. Black Interiors in West Hartford thought the best use for a spare room would be an adult game room – "an oasis," as she dubbed the room, a space to escape to at the end of a long day.

For resale purposes, Black said she felt it was important not to change the room's structure or anchor anything to the walls.

The room should be painted in soothing colors and be a luxurious,

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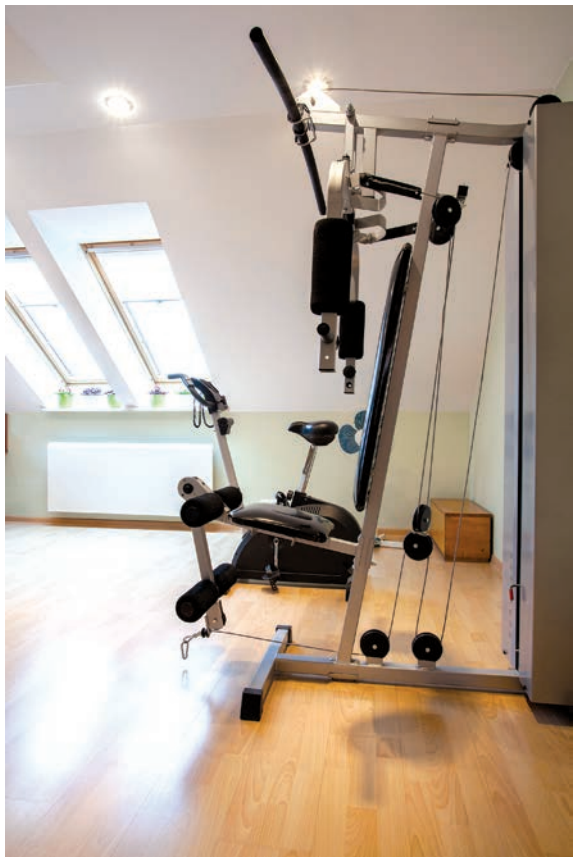


plush spot in which to relax and "veg out," Black said.

For her, there would be no phone in the room. While there may be a television, it would be hooked up to the laptop, so folks can get away from watching cable and watch shows online.

"Turn the phone off; just try to get to another space," she said. "Try to get away from the rest of the family, maybe try to get away from work."

She envisioned the space would be for a couple, like her own son and daughter-in-law, and would have two huge, oversized chairs.

"My son and his wife, they go home and play games," she said.

There would be a large chest between the chairs where the duo could each have a drink and where they would set their laptops. Both laptops would be connected to the TV so the couple could play games together.

While Black likes a contemporary look, she said she also likes a mix of styles and that the room can even be goofy.

It might also have magazines, newspapers and crossword puzzles on the chest or on the credenza where the television sits. There may also be books on shelves on either side of the credenza.

Stressing the importance of lighting, she said, "I like to have a multitude of different lighting in that room."

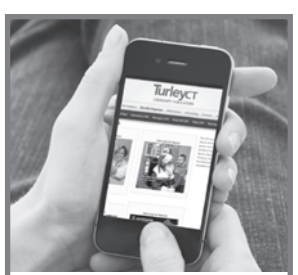
Ideas include recessed lighting and a lamp attached to the wall with a swing arm.

Hang an oversized picture of a beach or a favorite vacation spot, or someplace cheery or memorable, she said.

"It's nice to have, for instance, a little piece of where you've gone before," Black said. "Anything that cheers, ... brings another frame of mind. ... Some people like maps on the wall to figure where you're going next."

Books in the room can include travel books and there may be items for folks to enjoy hobbies while they watch television, such as yarn and needles for knitting.

"I'm just thinking about a room where people can think of things other than work," Black said "You're trying to grab snippets of time to be with your loved ones." **RHL**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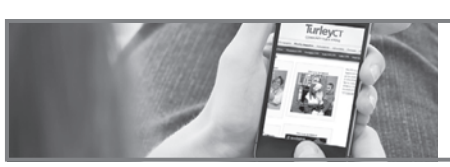
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Out of Sight

How and where to get rid of what you no longer want or need

Once spring cleaning is done, there will be a collection of items that are no longer wanted. Three things can be done with them: toss, sell or donate.

Items that are broken, stained or worn out should be thrown away. Be sure to check which items can be recycled and which ones will need a bulky waste pickup.

Some items will be good enough to sell.

Ralph Labozzo, appraiser and auctioneer at Golden Gavel, said the business services customers who want a few items appraised and those who want the entire contents of a house dealt with and the premises swept clean.

Right now, he said, vintage comic books from the late 1950s and early 1960s are hot sellers – those with a cover price of 10¢, 12¢ or 15¢. Super heroes from the Golden Age (Think Superman.) to the Silver Age (Think Batman.) are all in demand.

In addition to comic books, Labozzo said musical instruments are selling well. Think guitars and vintage saxophones. The same is true for Halloween and other holiday-themed ephermera from the early 1900s, and both vintage and contemporary game room items such as pinball and arcade games.

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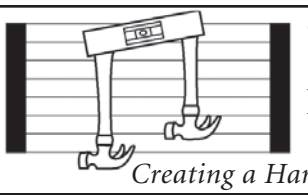
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LIVING Spaces

First edition leather bound limited edition books, especially if signed, along with coffee table books on the arts sell at auction.

There is no fee or obligation to have someone from the auction house come out and assess the items. Pick up would be scheduled for another time.

Items can also be sold online. Craigslist is especially good for large items that are difficult to pack and ship. It also saves you the service fee charged by eBay and Amazon.

Many clothing, accessories, jewelry and decorative items can be taken to a consignment shop provided they are in excellent condition. Items are priced with consideration given to condition, quality, brand, age, original purchase price, style and buyer demand. Consigners generally get between 40 percent and 55 percent of the sale price. A store's website will provide lists of items accepted – and those that are not – along with terms and conditions.

Some consignment shops deal specifically with furniture and other home accessories.

Sheri Jackson, longtime owner of Gillette Furniture Consignment in Wethersfield, said, "We love when people spring clean because we are often times the right fit for their lovely furniture and home décor."

Pub tables, sofas and desks are always in demand, along with console, coffee and end tables, and dining and bedroom sets, she said.

When working with large pieces of furniture, it's a common practice to begin with customers emailing photos of the items they would like to consign.

"We want to see what it is," Jackson said.

Style, condition and quality are all taken into account.

"We like to find the next happy home for their piece," she said.

Holding a tag sale is another way to get rid of just about anything. Try recruiting others in the area to join you – neighborhood sales attract more shoppers.

Most items in good condition can be donated, and most donations will be tax deductible. In addition to well-known organizations such as Goodwill and Savers, here are some places you can bring items.

Electronics

Your town's transfer station

Every town is required to establish a convenient location for recycling residential electronics such as computers, printers and televisions. For specifics, contact your town. Information is also listed on the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection's website at ct.gov/deep.

Green Monster
260 Brook Street
West Hartford
860-897-1426
greenmonsterecycling.com

Just about anything with a cord or that operated on batteries can be brought to this recycling center for free. Hard drives are destroyed and nothing ends up in a landfill. The only items not accepted are washers, dryers, microwaves, vacuums and appliances with refrigerant such as refrigerators, dehumidifiers, air conditioners and water coolers.

Clothing

The Clothes Horse
175 Park Road
West Hartford
860-233-1411

This thrift shop operated by the Junior League of Hartford accepts current fashions and accessories for women and men, including outerwear, tuxedos and gowns, and vintage clothing and accessories. Everything must be clean and free of rips, stains and fading.

University of Connecticut Health Center Auxiliary Thrift Shop
270 Park Road
West Hartford
860-586-8047

Run by volunteers, this shop accepts high-quality used clothing and shoes for men and women, jewelry and handbags. Unsold or unwanted clothing is donated to other organizations that assist those in need.

Market Square Thrift Shop
230 Market Square, Rear
Newington
860-667-7174

This shop, benefiting the Church of Christ Congregational, accepts men's, women's and children's clothing, jewelry and accessories.

Favarh Thrift Shop
250 Albany Turnpike
Canton
860-693-2899
favarh.org

The shop accepts men's and women's clothing, shoes and accessories. Donations can also be left at Favarh's main office at 225 Commerce Drive in Canton.

Second Chance Shop
730 Hebron Avenue
Glastonbury, CT 06033
860-633-5188
and
12 Station Street
Simsbury, CT 06070
860-658-7152

Items that can be donated include clothing for infants, children, men and women, along with accessories such as purses, hats, ties, scarves and jewelry. Run by auxiliary volunteers, proceeds from these shops benefit the programs and services of The Village for Families and Children.

Furniture

A Hand Up Inc.
860-424-2980
ahandupinc.org

This organization based in West

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LIVING Spaces

Hartford helps people transition from the streets into homes. Items must be new or gently used, modestly sized, basic and practical. Its current wish list includes twin and full bed frames, small sofas and love seats, small armchairs and recliners, dressers, nightstands, bookcases, end and coffee tables, television stands, lamps, kitchen tables and chairs. Pick-ups can be scheduled. Arrangements must also be made for dropping items off at the warehouse on Talcott Road. For more details, see ahandupinc.org/wish-list/.

Habitat for Humanity ReStore
500 Cottage Grove Road
Bloomfield
860-519-0828
hartfordhabitat.org/restore
This home improvement and donation center sells new and gently used furniture, home accessories and appliances. Pickups can be arranged.

Building materials

The ReCONNstruction Center
731 New Britain Ave.
Newington
860-597-3390

Photo courtesy of
The ReCONNstruction Center

reconnstructioncenter.org
This charitable organization accepts good quality, new, pre-owned, antique, surplus and reusable building materials, lighting fixtures, appliances, kitchen cabinets, plumbing fixtures, doors, paint, wood stoves, commercial shelving, tools, architectural salvage, and replacement and original vinyl windows. Pick-ups can be arranged at no charge.

Habitat for Humanity ReStore
500 Cottage Grove Road
Bloomfield
860-519-0828
hartfordhabitat.org/restore
This center accepts building materials including cabinets, countertops, electical hardware, roofing materials, paint, wallcovering, tile, floor coverings, doors, windows, plumbing materials, cinderblocks and bricks. For donation pick-ups, email photos of items to barbara@hartfordhabitat.org, along with your name, address and phone number.

Housewares

The gift shop at your local senior center

The swap shack at your town's transfer station

Favarh Thrift Shop
250 Albany Turnpike
Canton
860-693-2899
favarh.org
The shop accepts housewares and giftware. Donations may also be left at Favarh's main office at 225 Commerce Drive in Canton.

A Hand Up Inc.
860-424-2980
ahandupinc.org
Items being accepted are pots, pans, dishes, glassware, coffee makers, microwaves, silverware, bakeware, mixing bowls, storage canisters, cooking utensils and small appliances. No formal china, stemware or high-end appliances. Clean and gently used sheets, blankets, comforters, mattress covers, towels, pot holders, bath mats, shower curtains and liners, and small rugs may also be donated. Pickups and dropoffs need to be scheduled. For more details, see ahandupinc.org/wish-list/.

Market Square Thrift Shop
230 Market Square, Rear
Newington
860-667-7174
This thrift shop benefiting the Church of Christ Congregational, accepts small household appliances, dishes and glassware, home goods, gift items, toys and games.

The Clothes Horse
175 Park Road
West Hartford
860-233-1411
Among the items accepted are artwork, pottery, paintings, prints, housewares, books, decorations, unopened gifts and holiday items.

Second Chance Shop
730 Hebron Avenue
Glastonbury, CT 06033
860-633-5188
and
12 Station Street
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The shops accept household items

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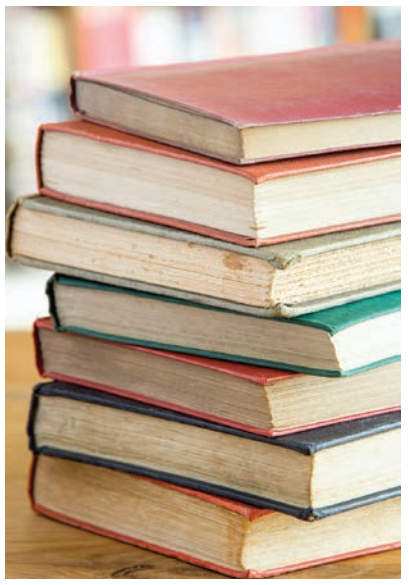
LIVING Spaces

such as china, glasses, linens, antiques and collectibles. No furniture, beds, cribs, strollers, car seats, exercise equipment or appliances can be donated. Run by auxiliary volunteers, proceeds from these shops benefit the work of The Village for Families and Children.



Books

Your library's used book sale

On the Road Bookshop
163 Albany Turnpike
Canton
860-693-6029
ontheroadbookshop.com

This store buys books in most subject areas, including art, Eastern and Western philosophy, literature, scholarly books, very old books, leather sets and some recent textbooks. No romance novels, Reader's Digest books or book club editions are accepted. Book-related items such as bookends, bookstands, prints and ephemera are also purchased. If you have too many to bring in, someone will come to you. The owner urges people to call before throwing out anything. Store credit is also offered.

Bicycles

Simsbury
Free Bike
828 Hopmeadow Street
Simsbury
860-841-2611
simsbury.bike

This free multi-town bike share program accepts bikes that are in good condition (no rust, no repairs needed). Bikes left at The Bicycle Cellar at 532 Hopmeadow Street will be brought to Simsbury Free Bike.

Household hazardous waste

Special collections are held for household hazardous waste that is generally defined as toxic, flammable, reactive or corrosive materials. These include oil-based paints, thinners, pool chemicals, pesticides, mercury fever thermometers and gasoline.

April 30, Farmington Farmington High School, 10 Monteith Drive, 8 a.m.-1 p.m. (Also serving Simsbury, Avon and Canton residents)

May 7, Newington, Town Garage, 281 Milk Lane, 8 a.m.-1 p.m. (Also serving Rocky Hill, West Hartford and Wethersfield residents)

June 12, West Hartford, Emanuel Synagogue, 160 Mohegan Drive, 8 a.m.-1 p.m. (Also serving Newington, Rocky Hill and Wethersfield residents)

June 18, Simsbury, Public Works Facility, 66 Town Forest Road, 8 a.m.-1 p.m. (Also serving Farmington, Avon and Canton residents)

June 25, Wethersfield, Webb School, 51 Willow Street, 8 a.m.-1p.m. (Also serving Newington, Rocky Hill and West Hartford residents)

July 9, Rocky Hill, Stevens School, 322 Orchard Street, 8 a.m.-1 p.m. (Also serving Newington, West Hartford and Wethersfield residents)

September 24, West Hartford, Public Works Garage, Oakwood Avenue, 8 a.m.-1 p.m. (Also serving Newington, Rocky Hill and Wethersfield residents) **RHL**

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Where to FIND IT

Spring Ring

With warmer weather comes a greater desire to be outside and moving. The Spring Ring comes with two circular trampoline-like pieces that let children and adults bounce the two balls it includes back and forth and allows for game creativity. It can be found at The Wooden Toy, 1273 Silas Deane Highway, Wethersfield. For more information, visit www.thewoodentoy.com or call 860-529-1945.

Fabulous fabrics

Ready to spruce up your home for spring? If you're crafty, check out these colorful home decorator goods, perfect for making curtains and slipcovers – and change up your home for spring. Or use them to whip up tote bags, placemats, dog beds, even horse blankets! You'll find a wide selection of fabrics, all for $2.99 a yard, at Affordable Fabrics, 2119 Silas Deane Highway, Rocky Hill, 860-563-7647.

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